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answer key, 1-F, 2-D, 3-E, 4-G, 5-H, 6-B, 7-A, 8-C

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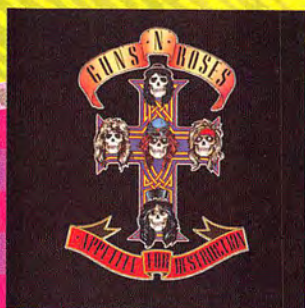
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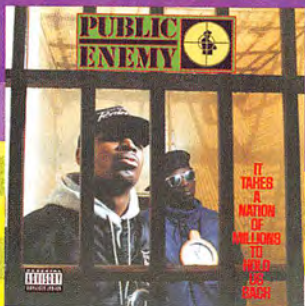
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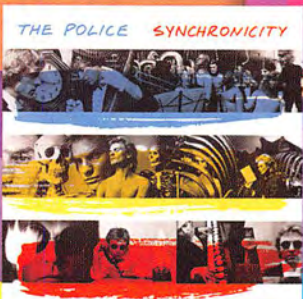
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THE OPEN DOOR



10.3.06

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On MySpace she's J-Dia, another fledgling pop diva with a bare midriff and some demos. In real life, though, she's Julia Diaco, known in the tabloids as the "Pot Princess" and the "NYU drug brat."



ON THE COVER

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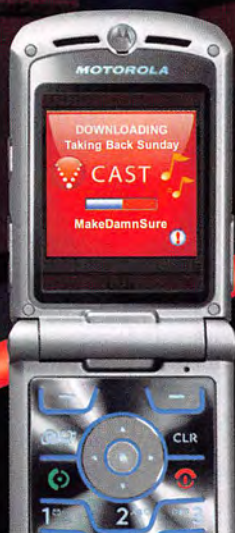
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140

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TOMMY LEE

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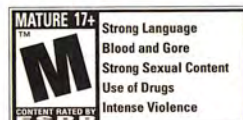
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You've Got Mail

WE WANT YOU TO SHARE ...



YOU'RE ... WELCOME?

Usually, *Blender*, you treat me to one lovely female on the cover of your magazine—a drenched Jessica, a seductive Xtna. But six? ("Pussy Galore," July)? Give a guy some advance notice. I damn near had a heart attack.

MICHAEL SHEA, HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA

The sad thing is, this guy's only 23. Lay off the fatty foods, Mike.

"BEEP" CRED

I didn't realize that the Pussycat Dolls had come up through some difficult times—not even getting the dancing toothbrush gig? Backup-dancer-dom on an Aaron Carter tour? Sounds like they've earned their recent success, pre-fab girl band or no. Plus, they got an Oscar winner (Charlize Theron) to perform with them—the Spice Girls never pulled that one off.

ANDREW CARLSON, EAST BRIDGEWATER, MA

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THAT

T.I. is selling millions of records and has the single of the year and the hip-hop world eating out of the palm of his hand ("The Tipping Point," July). So what's with that picture of him with his pants below his ass? Can't he afford a belt?

TONI PRESSMAN, NEW YORK CITY

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BRODY KYLE THE DOG



FLAVOR FLAV THE POP STAR



PCD: BFF!

ON THE ROAD

You lucky bastards got to visit so many of my heroes on your rock & roll road trip ("America: F**k Yeah!")—David Johansen, Slash, Hank III, um ... Gram Parsons in the form of a cat. My girlfriend and I want to take the same route next summer, though we doubt we'll get the same kind of access you guys did.

JACK CANSEI, PALMER, AK

If you take the same route, would you do us a favor? We think we left a credit card at a Days Inn just west of Albuquerque—if you could grab that for us, we'd so owe you one. Thanks!

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Am I reading this incorrectly, or did you guys come all the way to Nashville just to get stoned in some dude's backyard? Couldn't you have stayed in New York to do that? You didn't go to the Opry? You didn't eat extra-hot chicken at Prince's? You didn't go to see a show at the Ryman Auditorium? What the hell were you guys thinking?

TED CARTER, NASHVILLE, TN

In our defense, we may have done all of those things. Our notes were a little hard to read that day. And we don't have backyards in New York.

EMO-TOWN

Wow, Chris Carrabba was approached to join a Florida boy band? (Dear Superstar, July) At first I was pretty surprised, but after listening to the lyrics on his first album, I can actually picture it, although he'd have to hide those tats from all the frightened moms.

CHERYL DOLSEN, MIDDLEBURY HEIGHTS, OH

NOT JUST WAYNE BRADY

Of all the crazy rock stars you put in your magazine, I would have thought Jewel would be one of the last to choke a bitch ("Who Does Jewel Think She Is?," July). Shows what I know.

SAM WHEELER, BALL GROUND, GA

Ball Ground? Awesome!

IT'S BAHRAINING MEN. HALLELUJAH!

Nice job sending a guy to the Middle East to track down Jacko in his new natural habitat ("Michael of Arabia," July). Perhaps the strangest part of a very strange story: The King of Pop's career is now in the hands of the mastermind who created Right Said Fred? Can "I'm Too Sexy for My Burkha" be far behind?

G. GRAHAM, VIA E-MAIL →

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Nelly Furtado proves she's a promiscuous girl by wearing off clothes altogether.

OH, CANADA

I used to think the only good things that came out of Canada were hockey, Mike Myers, Jim Carrey and excellent bacon. I can now add Nelly Furtado and her fine booty-shaking music to the list after reading your feature on her ("Free As a Bird," July). Thanks!

JOE ZRALLWRECK, BLUFFTON, SC

Don't forget Rush. Canadian.

OUT OF HIS TREE

So, doctors had to examine Keith Richards after he tumbled out of a palm tree for evidence of brain damage ("Coconuts," July)? A question for these fine physicians, then: *How on earth could you possibly tell?*

LISA M., VIA E-MAIL

Apparently, the doctors lined up four shots of whiskey. Once Keef was able to correctly identify the brand and the year of distillation for each one just from sniffing, they knew he was going to pull through.

THE NEW NEW DYLAN

All this time, people have been calling Conor Oberst the heir to Bob Dylan's lyrical-genius/voice-of-a-generation throne, but it looks like the true master has been on *Newlyweds* all along ("The Ex Files," July). Who knew Nick Lachey was such a poet? I'm embarrassed to admit I only got two answers on that lyric-identifying quiz right. Is Nick really that talented, or is Bob just more of a hack than we ever realized?

M. JAMESON, VIA E-MAIL

STRANDED

I probably wouldn't last very long on that desert island with Rihanna ("How to Survive on a Desert Island," July), regardless of her helpful advice. Due to her inherent hotness, I think I'd die of heatstroke.

MATT SILEAMS, WAUWATON, WISCONSIN

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WIN ME!

SHERLOCK, HOMES

Nice article on the mysterious artist known as Swayze ("Who Is This Man?," June). The way I figure it, the name "Swayze" is a euphemism for a ghost. And if you flip around the words for Swayze's "real" name, you get Toney Clifton or Tony Clifton, Andy Kaufman's alter-ego. The only thing I can't figure out is, who is Swayze the alter-ego of? My guess is this is Cam'ron in disguise.

BERNIE FLORES, CHICAGO

Sigh. Looks like you might be on to us. So, after months of Omerta-level secrecy that even the Pentagon would admire, we're finally at liberty to reveal that our prodigal rapper Swayze is in fact the alter-ego of ... drumroll, please ... some dude. That's right: We made the whole thing up and paid a guy to pose in the photos. Seemed like a funny idea at the time. Still does, actually. But you guys probably won't believe that either, so continue hunting for those elusive MP3s.

SWEET DREAMS

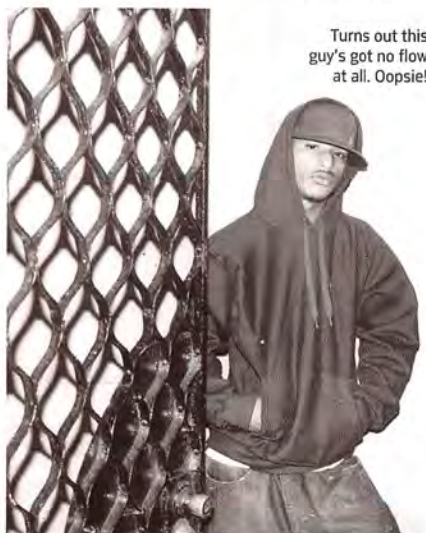
How can Dave Matthews possibly not remember the name of the awesome South African sleeping pill that knocked him out for nine hours straight with no hangover at all? ("Blender's 2006 Summer Tour Explainer," July) Dave, buddy, do us a favor: If it comes back to you, give us a shout, it sounds sweet. Thanks in advance.

TOM B., VIA E-MAIL

GRUMPY OLD MEN

Thanks for Robert Christgau's thoughtful review of the new Neil Young album ("Rebel Yell," July), which manages to talk about *Living With War's* music and not just its obvious politics. But I have a question: what does it say about this country that pop's most direct statement against our current administration and its actions has to come from a sexagenarian Canadian?

MARY HARDIG, YUKON, OH



Turns out this guy's got no flow at all. Oopsie!

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08.06

BURNER

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ... AND PLENTY YOU DON'T!

Sean Preston eyes his father's cellphone, contemplating calling child services himself.

FED UP!

BRITNEY SPEARS'S HUBBY RETURNS AS HER MARRIAGE, PARENTING AND REDNECKITUDE COME UNDER ATTACK



A BELEAGUERED, gum-smacking Britney Spears, six months pregnant with her second child, sat down for a June 15 prime-time interview with NBC's Matt Lauer to answer charges that she's a "bad mother" to nine-month-old Sean Preston and to quell speculation that her marriage to Kevin Federline is falling apart.

"I'm an emotional wreck right now," she admitted, before breaking down in

tears. Scrutiny over Spears's parenting skills sharpened after several public mishaps, including driving with Sean Preston on her lap (an act she proudly called "country"), fumbling him on a Manhattan street and, most recently, changing his diaper on the floor at a Victoria's Secret store.

Tabloids have overflowed recently with news predicting the couple's imminent demise (one *Us Weekly* head-

line blared **BRITNEY WANTS OUT**). Adding fuel to the fire, the couple were not photographed in public together for 78 days before finally emerging (photo, above) days before Spears's televised sitdown. Speaking to Lauer, Spears denied conjugal problems, describing their marriage as "awesome."

"He cares so much," she said of her husband. "His heart is awesome."

DAVID FEISNER

PHAT!

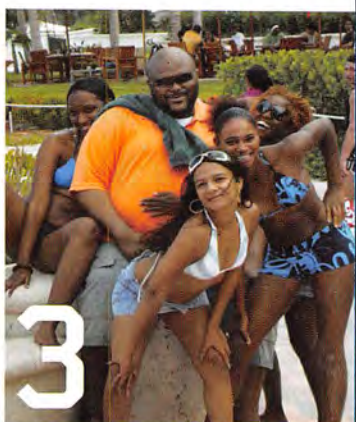
AMERICAN IDOL **RUBEN STUDDARD** POSES WITH A BEVY OF DELIGHTED FANS IN MIAMI



While relaxing in Miami Beach, Ruben Studdard, sporting mandals on his feet and his trademark girth, poses with an excited female fan.



Recognizing the potential of the impromptu photo opportunity, a second fan jumps into the frame and parks her booty between Studdard's ample legs.



Studdard, whose third record comes out in September, remains nonplussed as two more bikini-clad girls join in on the beachfront fun.

NEWS ROUNDUP

ALICE COOPER received the key to a North Dakota city, population 60, named Alice after the daughter of an historical railroad surveyor. The town consists of a fire department, a bar and a feed store.

PINK wrote a letter to Queen Elizabeth II urging her to discard the fur-lined hats worn by royal guards. "There is no reason for the guards to continue to wear these when animals are being killed just so they look good," she said.

VICTORIA BECKHAM had the date May 8 tattooed on her arm in Roman numerals to honor the first time she and husband David Beckham were intimate, in 1997.

CARMEN ELECTRA stars as **JOAN JETT**'s confused lover in a video for the rocker's new single "A.C.D.C." Le Tigre's Kathleen Hanna also has a cameo in the video.

WORD!



"I WOULDN'T FEEL RIGHT WEARING CLOTHES COVERING MY WHOLE BODY."

CHRISTINA AGUILERA

Heather Mills: The good news is, the settlement could help pay to fix that leaky roof.



TICKET TO RIDE

HEATHER MILLS: NEWLY UNEARTHED PHOTOS REVEAL THE PORNY PAST OF THE FUTURE EX-MRS. PAUL MCCARTNEY



ONE WEEK AFTER it was announced that Paul McCartney would be divorcing his wife of four years, racy photographs from Heather Mills McCartney's modeling past have come to light.

Shot in 1988 for German hardcore book *Die Freuden der Liebe*, which translates to "The Joys of Love," the photos show a near-naked Mills simulating sex with an unnamed mulleted male model as he massages her

breasts with baby oil. Poses feature such sex-enhancing props as handcuffs, a leash, exploding bottles of champagne and magic markers.

Mills, currently embroiled in a battle over the ex-Beatle's \$1.5 billion fortune, has insisted the book was intended as an educational tome, encouraging "caring relationships." The 112-page book features no words.

The photos were taken five years before the motorcycle accident that cost Mills her leg. **STEVE KANDELL**

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BLUNT'D!

JAMES BLUNT SCARES GIRLS AT A SYDNEY KARAOKE BAR, GETS BANNED FROM RADIO



"We decided to go to a Chinese-run Karaoke club, one of those places where you get a small room to yourselves," Blunt wrote on his website. "What fun."



"From the next room, we heard girls singing [my song] 'Goodbye My Lover,' so I burst in, grabbed a mic and sang the last chorus."



"I said, 'Thank you and goodnight!' and left them on the floor screaming." Three weeks later, a U.K. radio station banned Blunt's songs "to give listeners a rest."

NEWS ROUNDUP

Atlanta honored old-school boy band **NEW EDITION** by declaring May 19th "New Edition Day." The group, featuring original member and Atlanta resident Bobby Brown, were recognized for their contributions to the music industry.

Grammy-winning country singer **GRETCHEN WILSON** is writing her autobiography, entitled *Gretchen Wilson: I'll Tell You What a Redneck Woman Is*. The book, due in November, gives Wilson an opportunity "to connect on a different level with [her] fans."

PETE DOHERTY was detained at a Barcelona airport following a flight from London after the airline claimed they found a bloody syringe in the rest-room of the plane. A week later, the singer checked in to a rehab facility in Portugal, where he said Jesus visited him in a dream.

WORD!



"IF YOU ARE ONLY GOING TO SIT THERE, AT LEAST YOU CAN SMILE."

MADONNA TO A BORED CONFESSIONS ON A DANCE FLOOR CONCERTGOER

FRO-CHART

IN L.A. RECENTLY, **COURTNEY LOVE** ATTEMPTED A BOLD ACT OF HAIR GYMNASTICS. BUT FOR ONCE, THE NEWLY SOBER LOVE WAS NOT THE HIGHEST PERSON IN HOLLYWOOD



PLASTICS!

PUSSYCAT DOLLS ACTION FIGURES DEEMED TOO SKANKY FOR KIDS AFTER PARENTS' GROUPS COMPLAIN

PLANS FOR MINIATURE plastic versions of the Pussycat Dolls have been scrapped by the toy maker after the group's image was deemed too raunchy.

One month after announcing the sexy sextet would be immortalized as 12-inch action figures, complete with lingerie outfits, Hasbro decided their sexy image was "inappropriate" for the company's prepubescent consumers.

The reversal comes after several parents' and women's groups protested.



A spokesperson for Concerned Women for America, for example, complained the rubber-skin-baring dolls would "steal the innocence of our children."

The dolls were intended to be the first in a series of collaborations between Hasbro and record company Interscope. **LAUREN HARRIS**



IF YOU STINK, IT WOULDN'T MATTER IF YOU WERE THE LAST GUY ON EARTH.

*Next time, use the strongest Old Spice clear gel on the planet.
New Red Zone Clear Gel.*



ALMOST FAMOUS

RICK ROSS

THE ONETIME FOOTBALL HOPEFUL AND FORMER DRUG DEALER RAPS ABOUT PUSHING HEROIN AND STEROIDS. YUM!

BY JONAH WEINER

IN HIGH SCHOOL, Rick Ross played football. He was good enough to go pro, he says, and, unlike "that snitchin' ass Jose Canseco," he never, ever messed with steroids.

That is, until a few years later, when drug-dealing replaced his NFL dreams. "Steroids are good for cutting heroin," the hulking Miami rapper explains, as a barber runs clippers over the meaty folds of his neck. "A lot of times junkies be getting high off five different things. Them bitches don't even know."

It's a crafty technique that the 28-year-old Ross (born William Roberts) alludes to on "Hustlin'," his growling drug-game hit. "I feed 'em steroids to strengthen up all my chickens," he raps, bragging about injecting performance-enhancing drugs into his female drug smugglers.

It's an image at once fascinating, menacing, revolting and comical, which is a good way to describe Ross's music. Ross—who resembles Isaac Hayes if Hayes were a six-foot-one, 300-pound bulldog—works a hoarse, no-frills style, describing both the violence and the spoils of the Miami drug world with a gruff, teddy-bear charisma. "Miami's not all beaches and resorts," says the former dealer, who took his handle from notorious L.A. crack lord "Freeway" Rick Ross. "You got some of the most ruthless Cubans, Colombians and Haitians there. Killers making millions in the street."

"Hustlin'" has already spawned a remix featuring label boss Jay-Z and simpatico crack obsessive Young Jeezy. It's the lead single from *Port of Miami*, which Ross says will be to his city what "Doggystyle" was to L.A., what *Ready to Die* was to Brooklyn. He leans out of the barber's chair, his eyeballs bulging with intensity. "Miami needs its classic. That's where I come in."

OUT NOW *PORT OF MIAMI* (DEF. JAM)

**"MIAMI NEEDS ITS CLASSIC.
THAT'S WHERE I COME IN."**

ALL ABOUT ME!

FAVORITE NEW SONG

"I'm da Man," by D4L

MUST-SEE TV

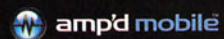
"What's that mean white lady's name? That CNN motherfucker? Nancy Grace."

BEST MIAMI RESTAURANT

"Prime One Twelve. It's real exotic, some real plush shit. \$100 salads."



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MAN PURSES

BECAUSE MALE ROCK STARS ARE TOO FASHION-FORWARD TO STASH THEIR LOOT IN FANNYPACKS



HARRY CONNICK JR.



JOEL MADDEN



MICHAEL STIPE



LENNY KRAVITZ

NEWS ROUNDUP

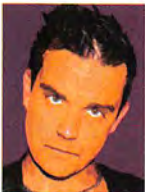
TOMMY LEE will serve as a guest designer for clothing company People's Liberation to create limited-edition denim, hooded sweatshirts and hats.

Franz Ferdinand frontman **ALEX KAPRANOS** is publishing a book called *Sound Bites*, a compilation of his food columns that have appeared in the U.K.'s *Guardian* newspaper.

OZZY OSBOURNE's summer festival Ozfest will feature a beauty pageant. Voting for candidates is done on the Ozfest website, then the winners from each tour stop will compete for the title of Miss Ozfest, to be awarded at the tour finale in Florida.

KANYE WEST and his production company are being sued for breach of contract for not returning a Mercedes G500 after its lease expired. The plaintiff is seeking \$53,747 in back payments.

WORD!



"I'VE GOT THE COMPUTER AND THE SLEEPING PILLS. THINGS ARE FINE."

ROBBIE WILLIAMS

Ricky Wilson at T in the Park's Zero Gravity stage.



BOING!

KAISER CHIEFS SINGER'S SPRINGY LEGS SAVE HIS LIFE

AN ACROBATIC FEAT saved Kaiser Chiefs frontman Ricky Wilson's life recently. The British singer was crossing a street in Leeds when a motorist struck him. Wilson reacted instinctively with the trademark jump-kick he employs during Kaiser live shows, sending himself flying up into the windshield rather than underneath the bumper, where the weight of the car would have most likely killed him. *NOEL BODDIE*

BLENDER'S BURNING QUESTION

WHO WOULD YOU LEAST LIKE TO SIT BESIDE ON A PLANE?

SURVEY SAYS



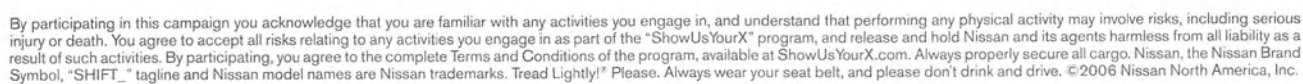
READER WISDOM

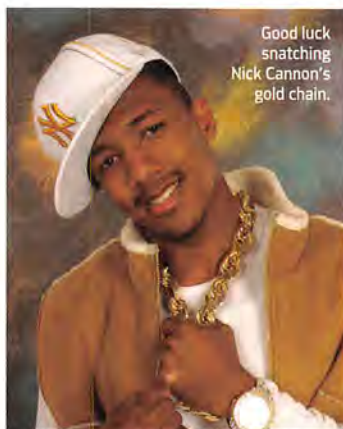
"NICOLE, BECAUSE SHE'D USE ALL THE BARF BAGS."

JANE WAGNER, MEADOWBROOK, PA

Log on to Blender.com for September's "BURNING QUESTION." One deserving reader will have his or her comment published in the magazine and win this awesome MOTOROLA V195 cellphone.







Good luck snatching Nick Cannon's gold chain.

DO YOU ROCK?

NICK CANNON

DOES THE 25-YEAR-OLD RAPPER AND ACTOR INDEED ... ROCK?

LARGEST NUMBER OF PEOPLE YOU'VE WOKEN UP NEXT TO IN A HOTEL BED?
Three.

BEST RUMOR ABOUT YOURSELF?
That I was marrying Tyra Banks.

EVER HAD A BRUSH WITH THE LAW?
I've been banned from Six Flags amusement parks across America because I got caught stealing \$400 worth of merchandise when I was in high school.

WORST ROCK & ROLL INJURY?
I was performing at Madison Square Garden and this one girl jumped up and pushed the mic into my mouth. I busted my lip and chipped my tooth.

WORST TOUR HORROR STORY?
One time a girl hid in the closet of my hotel room. I respected her hustle.

BIGGEST CELEB IN YOUR CELLPHONE?
Will Smith.

EVER WRECKED A CAR?
I trashed my Range Rover when I was 19. I was coming from this girl's house at 3 A.M. in Laurel Canyon. I fell asleep and hit a street sign and a fire hydrant.

EVER GET LUCKY ON AN AIRPLANE?
Yeah, with a girl I met in first class.

STUPIDEST THING YOU'VE EVER EATEN?
Jellied eel in London.

MOST EXPENSIVE ITEM OF CLOTHING YOU OWN?
\$3,000 crocodile Armani shoes.

BEST HIGH?
Eating candy.

HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU LOST YOUR VIRGINITY?
Thirteen. *DAVE HILL*

VERDICT

SEX AT 13? FIRST-CLASS MILE-HIGH CLUB? GIRLS HIDING IN HIS HOTEL ROOMS? YIKES! NICK CANNON ROCKS LIKE A MOFO!



STAGES (CAN I BALL/UNIVERSAL) IS OUT NOW.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Country singer **GEORGE STRAIT** received an honorary doctorate from Texas State University, where he first received a degree in agriculture in 1979. "Dr. Strait? I like the sound of that," he said while accepting the doctorate.

JOHNNY DEPP will play INXS singer **MICHAEL HUTCHENCE** in an upcoming biopic, and former girlfriend Kate Moss will play Hutchence's girlfriend Paula Yates. The frontman died under mysterious circumstances in an Australia hotel room in 1997.

Twenty-year-old **JACK OSBOURNE** is working on his autobiography, *21 Years Gone*, which will document his rise to fame on his family's reality television show and his struggle with drug addiction.

WORD!



"THE WORD 'KID' MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE A CHILD."

LINDSAY LOHAN

SPACE: THE FINAL FRONTIER

ROCK ELDER LINE UP TO BE LAUNCHED INTO SPACE ON THE **VIRGIN GALACTIC** SHUTTLE



WHEN VIRGIN GROUP CEO Richard Branson announced he was working to make space tourism available to the common man (with \$200K to spare), a ticket on his optimistically named Virgin Galactic became a must-have celebrity fashion

accessory. So far electronic music gadfly Moby, Jane's Addiction guitarist Dave Navarro and Kiss bassist Gene Simmons have either paid in full or shown serious interest.

Below, *Blender* probes their stardust dreams. *DAVID PEISNER*



GENE SIMMONS

DAVE NAVARRO

MOBY

SERIOUSNESS OF INTENT

Met Branson at a spacecraft convention and offered to send a check.

Paid in full.

Paid in full.

REAL MOTIVATION

The neverending quest to find untapped markets for Kiss ashtrays, Kiss bowling balls, Kiss decorative ceramic tiles and his own penis.

He's contractually obligated to participate in anything with the potential to become a reality show.

He's run out of people to license his songs to on this planet.

CREDENTIALS

Ability to breathe fire could come in handy if the ship's climate-control or fuel systems fail.

Spent large swaths of the '80s and '90s in a drug-induced haze not dissimilar to the effects of zero gravity.

Already owns a space suit, as seen on the cover of his 2002 album, *18*.

BRING

Kiss Kasket, in case things go horribly wrong.

Shirt.

Freeze-dried herbal tea and tofukey, leftover Kerry/Edwards '04 bumper stickers.

DON'T BRING

Back issues of *Gene Simmons' Tongue* magazine.

Solo album.

Michael Moore.

DA COPYCAT

AT A RECENT CONCERT IN NEW JERSEY, RAPPER **DA BRAT** TOOK SARTORIAL CUES FROM RED FRAGGLE





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WHAT'S A QIVIUT? WHO CARES, IT'S WORTH 18 POINTS! **?UESTLOVE**, DRUMMER FOR BELOVED PHILLY HIP-HOPPERS THE ROOTS AND OBSESSIVE FAN OF THE CLASSIC CROSSWORD GAME, OFFERS THIS HINT AND MORE

BY STEVE KANDELL
PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL LEWIS

1

PLAY WITH A RIVAL

Scrabble tends to bring out the worst in people, so I try not to play against people I'm close with. The end result is always an argument or near-pugilism. I actually fired an assistant over Scrabble—she was really condescending after beating me once, and it bled into the job.

2

PLAY WITH YOURSELF

Practice with Yahoo's online version—I spend hours daily doing this. It's fast-paced and prepares you for the pressure of a competitive game. After seeing a documentary about competitive Scrabble, I became addicted. My goal is to play Vegas by 2008.

3

LEARN WEIRD WORDS

Big words with X and Y help, but the key is the two- and three-letter words. For example, "AA" is in the Scrabble dictionary. And memorize the accepted words that use a Q but not U: qat, qanat, qaid, qindar, qintar, qiviut, qoph and qwerty. They're good to know.

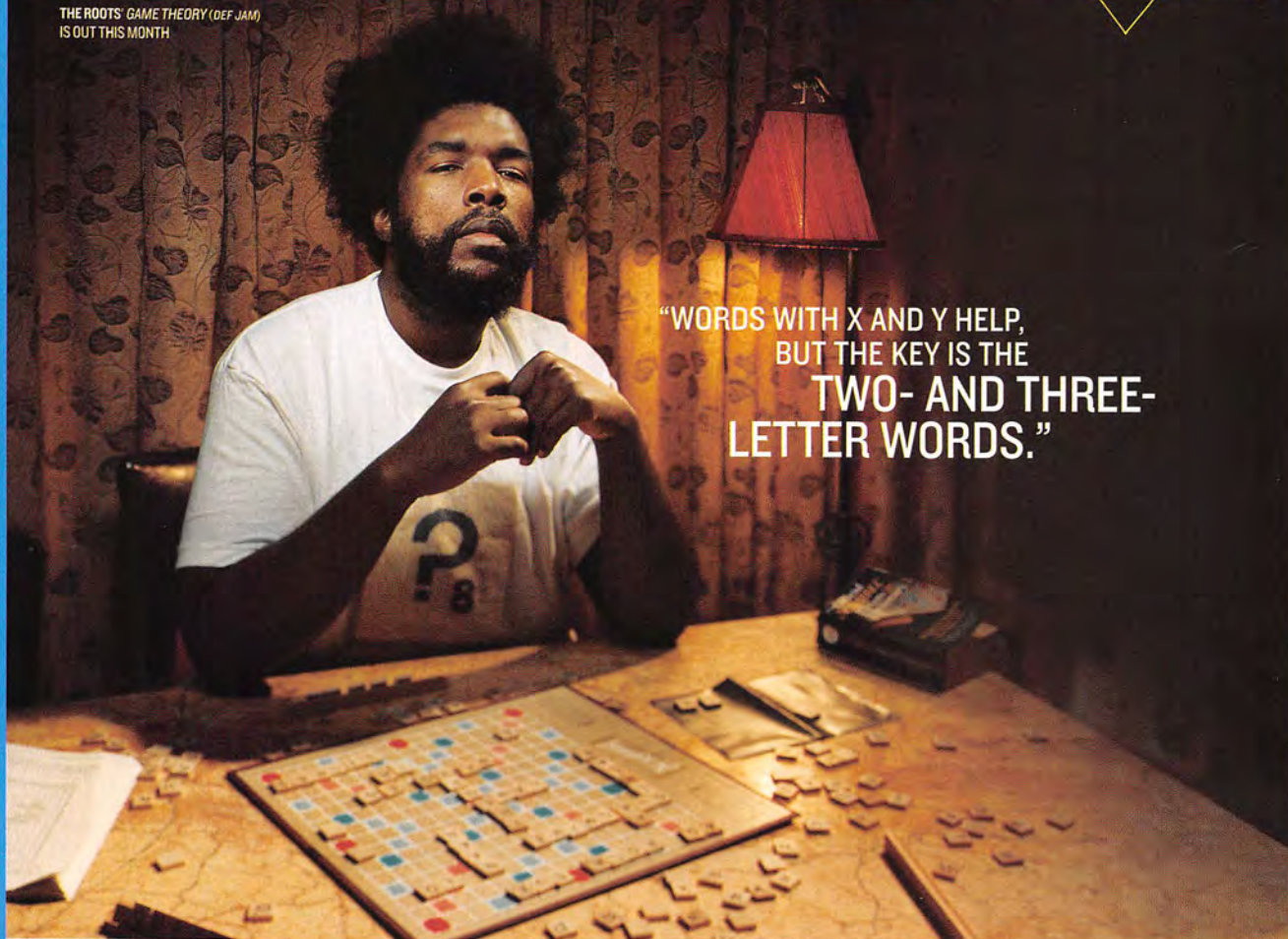
4

WHEN IN DOUBT, CHEAT

Make sure there's a mirror behind your opponent so you can see his tiles. We have two buses when we tour: Slytherin, which is the smut bus, and Gryffindor, which is the Scrabble bus. And Gryffindor has a mirror in the lounge near the back. You need every advantage you can get.

THE ROOTS' GAME THEORY (DEF JAM) IS OUT THIS MONTH

"WORDS WITH X AND Y HELP, BUT THE KEY IS THE TWO- AND THREE-LETTER WORDS."



*1 GB = 1,000,000,000 bytes. Available capacity will be less. Reproduced capacity will vary. Song claim based on 4-minute song encoded at 64 kbps VIMA. Video claim based on video encoded at 500 kbps MP4-SP. © 2006 Creative Technology Ltd. All rights reserved. Not intended for unauthorized recording.

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CAN'T COPA

SYDNEY BLASTS **BARRY MANILOW** TO KEEP NO-GOOD KIDS FROM LOITERING



To discourage teens from bringing hot rods to their usual weekend hangout, Sydney suburb Rockdale plans to pipe Barry Manilow through loudspeakers.



A few years ago, the dulcet sounds of crooner and alleged child-abuser Bing Crosby were used to scuttle youths from another Aussie gathering spot.



One Rockdale official explains the tactic: "Daggy music is one way to make the hoons leave ... because they can't stand it." **STEVE KANDELL**

NEWS ROUNDUP

CHER will take up a nightly residence at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas in 2008, replacing Celine Dion. A new concert hall will be built to accommodate her elaborate stage show.

BOY GEORGE will work at an HIV hospice in lieu of serving prison time after police seized 13 bags of cocaine from his house. George opted for the post, saying, "You can choose things, so I'm going to work in a hospice."

SNOOP DOGG has been banned indefinitely from the United Kingdom following a recent brawl in British Airways' flight lounge. Seven police guards were injured in the fracas.

The Black Eyed Peas' **FERGIE** will star in the new Quentin Tarantino/Robert Rodriguez horror movie *Grind House*, due next year. The directors chose the singer to add "sex appeal" to the film.

WORD!



"THE MORE GLOBAL WARMING, THE BETTER."
MARILYN MANSON

Lloyd Banks with non-threesome-having, non-music-thieving girls.



MÉNAGE!

LLOYD BANKS'S MULTI-PARTNER SEXCAPADE LEADS TO MUSIC LEAK

A PARTICULARLY DISTRACTING *ménage à trois* led to the leak of several songs intended for Lloyd Banks's new album, *Rotten Apple*.

While engaged in a threesome earlier this year, Banks misplaced a CD-R containing 14 tracks. "I was just lost in my ways, fucked two women at one time," he says. "Next thing I know, I can't find the CD." Banks suspects one of the loved-up girls uploaded the music to the Internet. **NOEL BODDIE**

WEIRD BAND ALERT

THE BIPOLAR BEARS
MENTALLY ILL AUSSIES SING ABOUT BEING MENTALLY ILL AUSSIES

SO, ARE THEY ALL BIPOLAR?

"It's not a prerequisite to have bipolar disorder in order to be in the band," explains totally sane vocalist Phil Heuzenroeder, the rock band's "musical facilitator." Any mental illness will do—the lineup also includes paranoid schizophrenics.

WHOSE IDEA WAS THIS?

The local city council, as a therapeutic outlet. Early incarnations were a little, well, nutty. "There used to be nine guitarists," says bassist Kevin O'Neill.



HOW, UM, STABLE IS THE LINEUP?

Not very. Sadly, they have lost members to suicide and deteriorating mental conditions. One recruit joined after the voice of Axl Rose invited him to play with Guns N' Roses. "Things don't flow with us as they would in mainline bands," says O'Neill. **DAVID PEISNER**



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WHEN WILL YOUR
FAVORITE POP STAR
CROAK?

#30 **BILLIE JOE ARMSTRONG**

BIRTH DATE FEBRUARY 17, 1972

CURRENT AGE 34

**DEATH CALCULATOR
STARTS AT AGE** 79

CATEGORY YEARS ADDED/SUBTRACTED

Caucasian American (-2) male (-3), inherited cancer risk (-2). -7

School daze: Nickname was "Two-Dollar Bill" for allegedly selling \$2 joints as a teen. -4

Heavy smoker: Supposedly picked band name while stoned and hearing *Sesame Street*'s Ernie say, "It's a green day." -8

Neurotic: First recording at age 5, first electric guitar at age 10, first composition at age 12. +4

Family pros: Married since 1994, has two sons, "I live a pretty normal life at home." +3

Family cons: Father died when Armstrong was 10. -2

Accident risks: Live shows are manic (he bounces, runs around, bumps into bandmates and throws stuff). -2

Anxiety: "Being on tour is a lot of stress" (-3), "I miss my family" (-2). -5

Honors: *American Idiot* topped the charts in the U.K., Canada, Australia and Japan and won three Grammys. +1

Obsessive-compulsive: Wrote treatment for movie based on *American Idiot* to make sure the film "doesn't suck." -2

Angst: "What the fuck are we gonna do now?" -1

Business savvy: Co-owns indie label Adeline Records. +2

Troublemaker: Arrested for indecent exposure at a Milwaukee concert in 1995. -1

ESTIMATED LIFE EXPECTANCY 57

**PROJECTED YEAR
OF DEATH** 2029

Gerontologist **DR. DEMKO** says: "Armstrong burns his candle at both ends. It's time to set, and stick to, well-balanced priorities between family, artistry and performing, in that order. Also, smoking with inherited cancer risks is playing with fire. Long-term use of marijuana hurts both his lungs and his mind."

OBITS

BILLY PRESTON
59, June 6, in Scottsdale, Arizona. Keyboardist with a claim to the "Fifth Beatle" tag. Preston featured on their hits "Get Back" and "Let It Be" and was a Rolling Stones sideman on *Sticky Fingers* and *Exile on Main Street*. He played with Sam Cooke, Little Richard and Ray Charles, and charted as a solo artist with No. 1 singles "Will It Go Round in Circles" and "Nothing From Nothing."

DESMOND DEKKER
64, May 25, in Surrey, England, of a heart attack. Jamaica's king of ska and the island's biggest musical ambassador before the rise of Bob Marley. Dekker topped the U.K. charts in 1969 with the song "The Israelites" and had several late-'60s hits in England and Jamaica.

VINCE WELNICK
55, June 2, in Sonoma County, California, of an apparent suicide. Grateful Dead keyboardist from 1990 to 1995. Welnick, the fourth Dead keyboard player to die, joined after Brent Mydland overdosed. Welnick was a founding member of the '70s San Francisco rock band the Tubes and played with Todd Rundgren.

WORD!



"ALL COOL
GIRLS ARE
COMPETITIVE
C**TS."
COURTNEY LOVE



Good Charlotte:
OK, everyone who
isn't covered in tats,
raise your hand.

IN THE STUDIO

"WE'RE N.W.A!"

THE TATTOOED TWINS OF **GOOD CHARLOTTE**
DISCUSS POSSIBLE HILARY DUFF COLLABORATIONS
AND THEIR UNLIKELY HIP-HOP CRED

THE BAD NEWS? Good Charlotte have been in the studio since April, and they still haven't recorded a duet with Hilary Duff. The good news? According to singer Joel Madden, Duff's boyfriend of two years, "We've talked about it a little. Anything's possible."

The mall-punk heroes are currently in L.A. working on the follow-up to 2004's *Chronicles of Life and Death*, a quasi-conceptual album about the burdens of fame that sold only one-third as many copies as its predecessor. "Our last record was a little selfish," Joel's twin brother Benji admits. "This one's more adjusted. I see all these bands doing the dark thing—we want to do the bright thing."

It's too early to pick a single, but both Maddens like "Keep Your Hands off My Girl," a good-natured jab at hipsters with "a really dirty, indie-rock dance vibe." Joel is also partial to "Show Me What You Live For," which was inspired by nasty looks he got at a Chanel show during New York City's Fashion Week. But lest fans worry they're getting

too caught up in the glamour of Hollywood and Manhattan, the twins also recorded a track with their new neighbor and "one of our best friends in the world," gangsta-rific Compton MC the Game. "We hang out with Game all the time," Benji says. "I'm going to get coffee with him right after this interview. Actually, he'll probably have a 40."

Benji describes the collaboration—tentatively titled "Fight Song"—as "N.W.A meets the Clash." So who's who in that formulation?

"Oh, we're definitely N.W.A," says Joel. "Or W.W.A—Wiggaz With Attitude."

JOSH EELLS

ALL ABOUT OUR RECORD

ARTIST Good Charlotte

PRODUCER Don Gilmore

STUDIO NRG Studios, North Hollywood, CA

LAST ALBUM *The Chronicles of Life and Death*, 2004

NEW ALBUM *Good Charlotte 4*, October 2006

ALSO IN THE STUDIO

Dirty South son **CHINGY** is recording his third album, *Hood Star*, in Atlanta, Miami and L.A., with Jermaine Dupri and Timbaland producing, due in September.

Label boss and "new Dylan" **CONOR OBERST** is recording the follow-up to his two 2005 CDs at Presto! Studio in Omaha, with producer Mike Mogis.



Sri Lankan rapper **M.I.A.** was forced to halt work on the follow-up to 2005's *Arular*, with Timbaland, after being barred admittance to the United States.

yaris | clean





20

SONGS YOU SHOULD DOWNLOAD THIS MONTH

1 BEYONCÉ FEAT. JAY-Z

"DÉJÀ VU" COLUMBIA



Hip-hop's prom king and queen reunite on wax for a burning, brassy brag-a-thon.

2 ARCTIC MONKEYS

"CIGARETTE SMOKER FIONA" DOMINO



B-side from the U.K. rawk wunder-kinds about that strange, fascinating species called "the drunk rich girl."

3 PHARRELL FEAT. KANYE WEST

"NUMBER 1" STAR TRAK/INTERSCOPE



Glossy R&B pop about loving a girl enough to, y'know, remember her name, from Pharrell's (so-star-studded-it-hardly-counts-as-a) solo album.

4 YUNG JOC

"IT'S GOIN' DOWN" BAD BOY SOUTH/ATLANTIC



Diddy's new Southern protégé comes armed with awesome-stupid beats and a killer drawl—so irresistibly fly, even Tom Cruise got crunk to it on BET!

5 THE KILLERS

"BLING" ISLAND



The Vegas new wave boys beef up their sound with this galloping single, which is about either survival or some really fly diamond chains.

7 YOUNG LOVE

"CLOSER TO YOU" STOLEN TRANSMISSION/ISLAND



NYC new wave sensatoid whips up a lovelorn groove—powered by a guitar sound poised halfway between a shimmer and a tremble.

8 RICK ROSS FEAT. JAY-Z AND YOUNG JEEZY

"HUSTLIN'" [REMIX] SLIP N SLIDE/DEF JAM



Def Jam's heavy hitters share fond recollections of hussalin'-huss-huss-hussalin', and Mr. Carter almost responds to Cam'ron's attempted assault.

9 FROM FIRST TO LAST

"THE LATEST PLAGUE" EPITAPH



Hurling screamo-metal about how the world is full of fakes and how it's okay to be as ugly as you wanna be.

10 AUDIOSLAVE

"REVELATIONS" EPIC



A fantastic roar about telling a patronizing know-it-all to shove it. Featuring Chris Cornell's scratchy wail and Tom Morello's googly-woogly-wikka-waaaah, naturally.

11 THE KNIFE

"SILENT SHOUT" RABID/MUTE



Dark, haunting techno from Sweden, the land of state-funded health care and nationalized blonde beauty.

12 THE GRATES

"19 20 20" DEW PROCESS



Girl-fronted garage pop jaunt from this buzzy Aussie trio going on about a bad-news dude.

13 ADAM GREEN

"DRUGS" ROUGH TRADE



The hipster crooner belts out a cracked orchestral ode to recreational narcotics use—indisputably the best kind!

14 JIBBS

"CHAIN HANG LOW" GEFEN



Dirty South newbie enlists a bunch of kids and jacks a children's song for an insanely catchy track that's all about really long, really blingy chains.

15 M. WARD

"TO GO HOME" MERGE



Plinking, charging, scrappy indie-pop—featuring an optimistic chorus and Ward's charismatic wheeze.

16 THOM YORKE

"THE ERASER" XL



Jittery beats, piano samples and eerily paranoid moans—the disembodied 'Head makes his beautiful solo break, built on Kid A and Amnesiac sounds.

17 BUSTA RHYMES FEAT. MISSY ELLIOTT

"HOW WE DO IT OVER HERE" AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE



Dr. Dre's sexy doom-synth beat + Busta's lascivious snarl + Missy's party chants = meanest Busta song in a long, long time.

18 CHRISTINA AGUILERA

"AIN'T NO OTHER MAN" RCA



Xtina returns, deskankified, and teams with DJ Premier for an explosive funk-hop-soul jam about lovin' your boo.

19 LLOYD BANKS

"MY HOUSE" G-UNIT/INTERSCOPE



50's gruff pal laces a vicious Timbaland beat with eviction threats worthy of a landlord.

20 YO LA TENGO

"BEANBAG CHAIR" MATADOR



The Hoboken alt-rock heroes are back with sunny, horn-filled indie-pop.

SONG OF THE MONTH

CASSIE "ME & U"

NEXT SELECTION/BAD BOY/ATLANTIC



Bazonkulously hot model-turned-singer gets all robo-horny over steamy Kraftwerk&B.



ICON KEY



SADDOES



HIPSTERS



RAWK



AGING HIPSTERS



CRUNKY



SUPERSTAR POP



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INSIDER

KNOWING STUFF IS GOOD

Barry heroically goes on with the show, despite the horrible mishap at the mousse factory.

**WIMPIN'
AIN'T
EASY**



SURE, BARRY MANILOW IS A SNIVELING SOFT-ROCK POODLE. BUT HE COULDN'T EVEN CRACK THE TOP 10 OF *BLENDER*'S 25 BIGGEST WUSSES ... EVER. (P. 48)



Dear Superstar

YOU SEND QUESTIONS, WE GET ANSWERS

David Johansen

THE LEADER OF THE NEW YORK DOLLS EXPLAINS WHY YOU SHOULD NEVER CROSS A DRAG QUEEN, WHERE HE WENT WRONG IN HOLLYWOOD AND HOW MUCH HE'LL CHARGE TO PAINT YOUR PORTRAIT

BY ADAM HIGGINBOTHAM

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRY RICHARDSON

X “We used to run this neighborhood!” growls David Johansen, 56, ambling across the Bowery and lighting the latest in a long chain of cigarettes. “When I was in the Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers, they used to extort money from shopkeepers on St. Marks Place. It was a new adventure every day.”

As a teenager in an anarchist street gang; as leader of legendary cross-dressing protopunks the New York Dolls; as lounge-lizard alter-ego Buster Poindexter: Staten Island-born Johansen has been eyewitness to 40 years of New York hipster history and has a rambling anecdote to tell about most of it. (“I knew both Andy Warhols,” he says. “I knew his visage, but I also knew the guy who would make meals for homeless people.”) Besides that, he colorfully flopped in Hollywood, developed a successful sideline as a painter and can be heard on Friday afternoons spinning kaleidoscopically eclectic tunes on Sirius radio. And now, despite the deaths of Dolls drummers Jerry Nolan and Billy Murcia, guitarist Johnny Thunders and bassist Arthur “Killer” Kane, Johansen and original rhythm guitarist Sylvain Sylvain are back with the band’s first new album in 32 years, *One Day It Will Please Us to Remember Even This*.

But as he sips a glass of mineral water in a Lower East Side restaurant and considers your inquiries, it seems even a man who has seen it all can still be taken by surprise: “Where did you get these questions from? I didn’t know anyone knew these things about me ...”

YOU ONCE SAID THAT A DOLLS REUNION WOULD BE LIKE GOING TO SIBERIA. WHAT CHANGED YOUR MIND?

THUNDERS65, SHERMAN OAKS, CA

I don’t know when I said that. Probably 1976. You know, Morrissey called me in 2004 and said, “Do you want to do a reunion show?” I thought it’d be one show and a lot of fun. And I had more fun than I even intended to have. It all just fell together—it was magical, in a way.

DO YOU HAVE ANY MAFIA STORIES FROM GROWING UP IN STATEN ISLAND?

LISA J., LARCHMONT, NY

When I was growing up, the mob was really kind of quaint. There was a man at this neighborhood car service who used to sit in the back room—really dingy with institutional green paint covered in nicotine and no windows. He’d sit there in a green visor, people would give him envelopes of money and he’d count it, grumble and smoke a cigar. Years later, when mob boss Paul Castellano got assassinated, we saw his picture in the paper, and realized that’s who that man was: Paul Castellano. And his life was, like, really small.

WHAT WAS THE MOST RIDICULOUS THING YOU HAD TO DO IN CHARLES LUDLUM’S RIDICULOUS THEATRICAL COMPANY?

J. SCHERMER, LAWRENCE, KS

I wasn’t, like, a major actor, I was a spear-carrier. But there was one scene—in my third year of high school—and I was a lion. I had lion hair around my wrists and my ankles and my hair all teased out—and that was all I was wearing. I was naked—except for fuzzy stuff around my ankles and wrists.



“IF A GUY’S MAKEUP
IS DONE TOO WELL,
IT’S KIND OF NANCY-
LOOKIN’.”



Three dead guys, one midget, a metric ton of hairspray: the Dolls in the East Village, 1974.



David closes his eyes to wish the big black 'X' away. New York, 1978.

I READ THAT THE DOLLS ONCE PERFORMED AT A BATHHOUSE IN BROOKLYN. WAS THAT THE STRANGEST GIG YOU EVER PLAYED?

PINHEAD, 7, NEWTON, MA

I remember that gig—that *was* pretty strange. A bathhouse in Brooklyn Heights called Man's Country—it was old guys sitting around in towels around this little pool. We were really drunk. The sound was terrible, and there were all these cowboy accoutrements hanging on the walls and we were taking them off and using them. I remember I put this saddle on Arthur and rode him around a little bit.

YOU'RE EVEN SKINNIER THAN MICK JAGGER. ANY DIET TIPS?

JMARLEY, AMARILLO, TX

I have a sick person's diet: In the morning I have a green concoction called "The Ultimate Meal," made by this guy in California; it's, like, freeze-dried vegetation from seven continents—you'd need to graze on seven continents to get this much nutrition. In the daytime I eat a lot of cake and fruit—muffins and things. And then at night I eat big meals—with dessert and everything. It's just the way my body works.

DID YOU AND FELLOW NEW YORKER JOEY RAMONE EVER COMMISERATE OVER HOW SO MANY BANDS, FROM KISS TO THE SEX PISTOLS, MADE A LOT MORE MONEY OUT OF YOUR IDEAS THAN YOU EVER DID?

MICHAEL 61378, TEMPE, AZ

No—nor were we the types that would commiserate about such a thing. But Joey made a lot of money. The Ramones would play in front of a half-million people in Brazil—he was huge. He had, like, an investment portfolio and all this shit. I don't think he ever bemoaned his financial situation.



"I COULD PAINT YOUR PORTRAIT FOR 10 OR 15 GRAND."

WHO'S THE MOST CONVINCING DRAG QUEEN YOU'VE EVER SEEN?

TR, BLOOMFIELD, NJ

I never really knew a drag queen that I thought was a woman—all the ones I knew were tough guys that dressed in drag. Wayne/Jayne County was singing one night at CBGBs, and Handsome Dick Manitoba—who fancied himself to be this machismo kind of old-fashioned guy—went by the stage and said something like, "You suck, you faggot." Wayne jumped off the stage and beat him literally to within an inch of his life. I had to avert my gaze because I didn't want to be witness to a murder. They took him away on a stretcher.

DO YOU REMEMBER THE LAST TIME YOU SAW JOHNNY THUNDERS?

BABBITT, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Alive? The last several times I saw him were similar—I wouldn't see him perform. Maybe we'd have lunch or meet at some

music business function. He was this loveable loser, like a young Pacino character. He'd decided he was going to make a career of being a junkie, and so you didn't talk about dissuading him, because he'd made up his mind about that. I don't think you'd discuss politics or philosophy with him; it would be more like kids' stuff—this girl, or that guy, or what you think of this band. Heroin addicts—it's like *Groundhog Day* with them. Every day is pretty much the same: They don't really evolve, they stay where they were the day they became a junkie, emotionally and intellectually. They're pretty consistent that way—you always know where you are with them.

WHAT DID BEING IN THE DOLLS TEACH YOU ABOUT APPLYING MAKEUP?

STAR69, BELLINGHAM, WA

It's really easy to apply—especially for guys. Because a guy's makeup doesn't have to be done right—if it's done too well, it's kind of nancy-lookin'. Just slop it on.

WHAT'S THE ONE BOOK THAT EVERYONE SHOULD READ?

ELIZABETH-J, HARTFORD, CT

That would be *The Book—On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are* by Alan Watts. The most important thing in life is to know who you are, and if you look around this great Orwellian world we're living in, most people haven't got a clue. Once you know the self, then you know the nature of all things. I first read it when I was 16—but I've read it 20 times since then. It's not a big book. And you don't have to be an intellectual to read it. →



Wayne County: Dude looks like a ... dude.

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White trash:
Johnny Thunders
and Johansen
L.A., 1973.



Pomp and circum-
stance: as Buster
Poindexter in 1987.



One of the few
musicians to
come out in
favor of piracy.

CAR 54, WHERE ARE YOU?—WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?

JAMES P., TAMPA, FL

Oh my god! I was really broke. I really needed the money. Essentially that's what I was thinking. And it ended my movie career, so I didn't have to think about that any more.

DID ANY OF THE OTHER DOLLS COME AND SEE YOU PERFORM AS BUSTER POINDEXTER?

DANNY B., BRISTOL, TN

I would imagine—especially if there was a bar tab. It was kind of an interesting trip for me—I got to play in all these places I would never have known about. I played the wedding of the daughter of the guy who runs the World Bank, stuff like that. You could be leaning against the wall, smoking, listening to Kissinger letting loose on some guy.

WHAT'S THE MOST YOU'VE EVER BEEN PAID TO PLAY "HOT, HOT, HOT"?

CBGB2, DURHAM, NC

A lot. Maybe \$50,000. I played it at the World Cup in L.A.—that was good bank.

WHAT DO YOU MISS MOST ABOUT THE OLD NEW YORK?

BLUNDY, OCEAN CITY, MD

There used to be so many joints where you could go in and sit and have these incredible conversations with people and there was no wondering who you were or who they were. They seem to be few and far between now. Now people talk about, "Oh I know this great



"MADAME BUTTERFLY WAS A SEMINAL MOMENT IN MY LIFE."

dive bar"—and you check it out and it's just full of these guys who, like, play lacrosse.

YOU PLAY A LOT OF OPERA ON YOUR RADIO SHOW. IS THERE ONE OPERA GUARANTEED TO MAKE YOU CRY?

C-FINGERS, SMYRNA, GA

So many operas can make me cry. *Tosca's* good; *Madame Butterfly*—if it's done well. My father was an opera singer when he was young, and the first opera I ever saw—I was, like, 6—was *Madame Butterfly*. It was a seminal moment in my life. It was the first time I'd ever considered the notion of suicide.

HOW MUCH WOULD YOU CHARGE TO PAINT MY PORTRAIT?

SUGARLIPS, NORMAN, OK

The price is always going up—but right now I could do it for about 10 or 15 grand. That's as of today. So if you really want it, you should move. It's a very painstaking technique that I use—very meticulous. There's a lot of coats.

WHAT MADE YOU FINALLY STOP DRINKING?

S. JORDAN, ALAMOGORDO, NM

Besides feeling like I was gonna die? I was in L.A. doing this lame show for VH1, and I was overworked and I got really ill. I was being shipped around from doctor to doctor and they were shooting me up with all kinds of stuff so that I could continue hosting this show. Then I met a doctor, a very kindly, wizened man, and he got me through it: He said, "David, David, David, you have to take it easy." And after that, one night I was having a drink, and kind of looked at it and put it down. I never drank again.

DID YOU EVER HAVE ANY DOUBTS ABOUT CALLING YOUR NEW BAND THE NEW YORK DOLLS NOW THAT SO MANY OF THE ORIGINAL MEMBERS ARE DEAD?

BIGBEN, YORK, PA

No. It's very important in this culture to have a brand. I was in a band with Syl after the New York Dolls called the David Johansen Group. Not that many people cared. But you call it the New York Dolls ... we have a logo. I wouldn't say it's a Mercedes-Benz, but it's a Ford. You take that logo away, you'd be in a Yugo. I was talking to [Blondie's] Clem Burke—he came to a couple of the shows and he was like, "The New York Dolls! It's so great, David!" And I was saying, "You know, it's not really the New York Dolls, man." And he said, [shouting angrily] "It fuckin' is too!" And I was like, "I am not fighting this." So I'm not fighting it. [BLUNDER]

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**NICK LACHEY'S
DIVORCE ALBUM
WALLOWS IN MISERY
AND SELF-PITY.**



Donovan: "All aboard the wimp express!"

25

BOYS DO CRY

ROBERT SMITH

Beginning with the Cure's first B-side, "10.15 Saturday Night," which finds its narrator sitting home crying, waiting for a girl to call, Smith has made a fetish out of romantic disappointment and pioneered a vocal style in which he sounds on the verge of breaking into heaving sobs at any moment. His tent-like black sweaters, smeared lipstick and messy bird's nest of dark hair have become the uniform of choice for generations of histrionic white kids convinced the world doesn't understand their pain.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: "The Lovecats," the Cure's fluffball 1983 hit, which features Smith literally meowing over a tune best suited for preschoolers.

24

CUTESY CELT

DONOVAN

If a unicorn could sing songs, it would sound like Donovan. His curly mop, Scottish accent and fanciful songs, inevitably full of cutesy rhymes and childish doggerel, so enraptured stoned hippies that in 1967 he compared his power to that of Hitler. The moony, mystical minstrel routinely performed in a white robe surrounded by flowers and incense, and even declared he'd "come to lead" a change in America, one that would initiate "the beginning of a soft, quiet time." Yes, cloying ditties like "Mellow Yellow," "Jennifer Juniper" and "Clara Clairvoyant" were certainly quiet. But quietly annoying.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: Sang backing vocals on the Beatles' "Yellow Submarine," proving that wussiness is contagious.



SMITH IS AN ICON FOR A GENERATION OF HISTRIONIC WHITE KIDS.

23

80% WUSSY

EVERYONE IN 'N SYNC (EXCEPT JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE)

Just as surrounding yourself with fat people makes you look thin, J-Tim's cool-guy status reflects how uncool his boy-bandmates were. Lance Bass achieves cosmonaut accreditation but can't find anyone to launch him into space; Joey Fatone sings show tunes; Chris Kirkpatrick fronts a presumably Spinal Tap-inspired "rock" outfit called Nigels II; and JC Chasez records "I'm Not Sleeping Alone," in which he doth protest too much.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: In "Without Me," Eminem says Kirkpatrick should get his ass kicked "worse than them little limp-bizkit bastards." No one argues.



'N Sync, left to right: the other guy, the other guy, the other guy and the other guy.

Natalie Merchant auditions for *The Ring III*.



22

SNIFFY SCHOOLMARM

NATALIE MERCHANT

There's nothing wrong with do-gooders; after all, they, uh, do good. So we don't dislike the former 10,000 Maniacs singer for playing lots of benefits, or for posting gardening links and haikus on her website. But Merchant is like that goody-goody in the ninth grade who always reminded the teacher if she forgot to assign homework. It's wrong for a parent to hit a child, but the main point of her song on that topic, "What's the Matter Here?," seems to be the illustration of Merchant's own moral superiority to an angry parent. Plus, she declaims her own decorous folk-rock songs as if she's reading Shakespeare on the stage of the goddamn Globe Theater.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: Did we mention the haikus on her website?

21

THE FATHER OF WUSS

PAT BOONE

In 1955, Fats Domino, a black piano wizard from New Orleans, cut "Ain't That a Shame," a bouncy R&B number he'd written. Pat Boone, a clean-cut preppie crooner, re-recorded it, only without the soul, and released it the same year, selling far more copies. Thus was born a career in Caucasian dilution: Just as rock was turning dirty, Boone whitewashed raucous songs by Little Richard and others, selling sterile versions of black music and blooming into the decade's second-biggest pop singer, behind Elvis Presley. In his later years, Boone became an apologist for President Bush's war in Iraq.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: Fathered Debby Boone, whose appalling 1977 smash, "You Light Up My Life," is the worst song in the history of the world.



Start making yours now at converse.com.





Garth Brooks: "Does this shirt make my ass look Brokeback?"

20

CRYBABY COWBOY

GARTH BROOKS

Where earlier generations of country stars loved Cadillacs and whiskey, Brooks adored James Taylor and Dan Fogelberg, and even cried onstage while performing his sentimental ballads. He ushered in a generation of neutered country dudes, and sold more records than anyone but the Beatles, by embodying a cultural turn towards I-need-some-Kleenex confessions.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: In a Barbara Walters TV interview, she asked about his children, and his eyes filled with tears.

19

SOFT, WHITE AND PLAIN

BREAD

As the Me Decade dawned, Bread helpfully unsaddled the 1960s' groovy free-love ideals from any downer political agenda that could potentially ruin the mood. In doing so, mellow, mushy tunes like "Make It With You" and "Baby I'm-a Want You" created the oxymoronically named "soft rock" template from which a thousand Starland Vocal Bands would soon bloom.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: In a catalogue filled with drippy odes to being hopelessly whipped, "It Don't Matter to Me" deserves special mention for blithely accepting a lover banging other guys.



PAUL MCCARTNEY INSISTED CREW MEMBERS GO VEGAN.

18

HIP-HOP HIPPIE

COMMON

Being a sensitive backpacker MC is one thing. But when you're a teetotaling, incense-burning, crocheted-scarf-wearing vegetarian whose real name is Lonnie Lynn ... well, let's just say street cred isn't an issue. Call him the hip-hop Stuart Smalley: "I just wanna be happy with being me," Kanye's boho homey once rapped. Awww...

WUSSIEST MOMENT: Shortened his name from Common Sense in 1995 after being sued by a ska band with the same name. A ska band.



Common: "Knit one, purl one ... homey."

17

ENTER SADMAN

METALLICA

The haircuts were lame and the anti-Napster crusade lamer, but neither prepared fans for the soppy bitchfest that was *Some Kind of Monster*: The once-throttling metalheads dropped \$40K a month on a touchy-feely life coach in a Cosby sweater who played master to Metallica's puppets. Lars and James bicker and weep throughout, but neither has the decency to just go ahead and slug the other.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: Lars's ego is crushed by his gnomish father who, upon hearing a new song, sagely advises, "I would delete that."

16

LILY-LIVERPOOL

PAUL MCCARTNEY

After the Beatles imploded, George went Eastern mystic, John became an art-damaged revolutionary, Ringo moved to L.A. and hoovered half of Columbia with Keith Moon, and Paul ... wrote "Maybe I'm Amazed" and "Silly Love Songs" while insisting crew members go vegan. Only rock star ever to win Order of Merit of Chile for "services to music, peace and human understanding."

WUSSIEST MOMENT: After decades as a dedicated pot smoker, Macca quits in 2002 at the insistence of high-on-life new bride Heather Mills. His kowtowing is rewarded four years later with a potentially half-billion-dollar divorce suit.

15

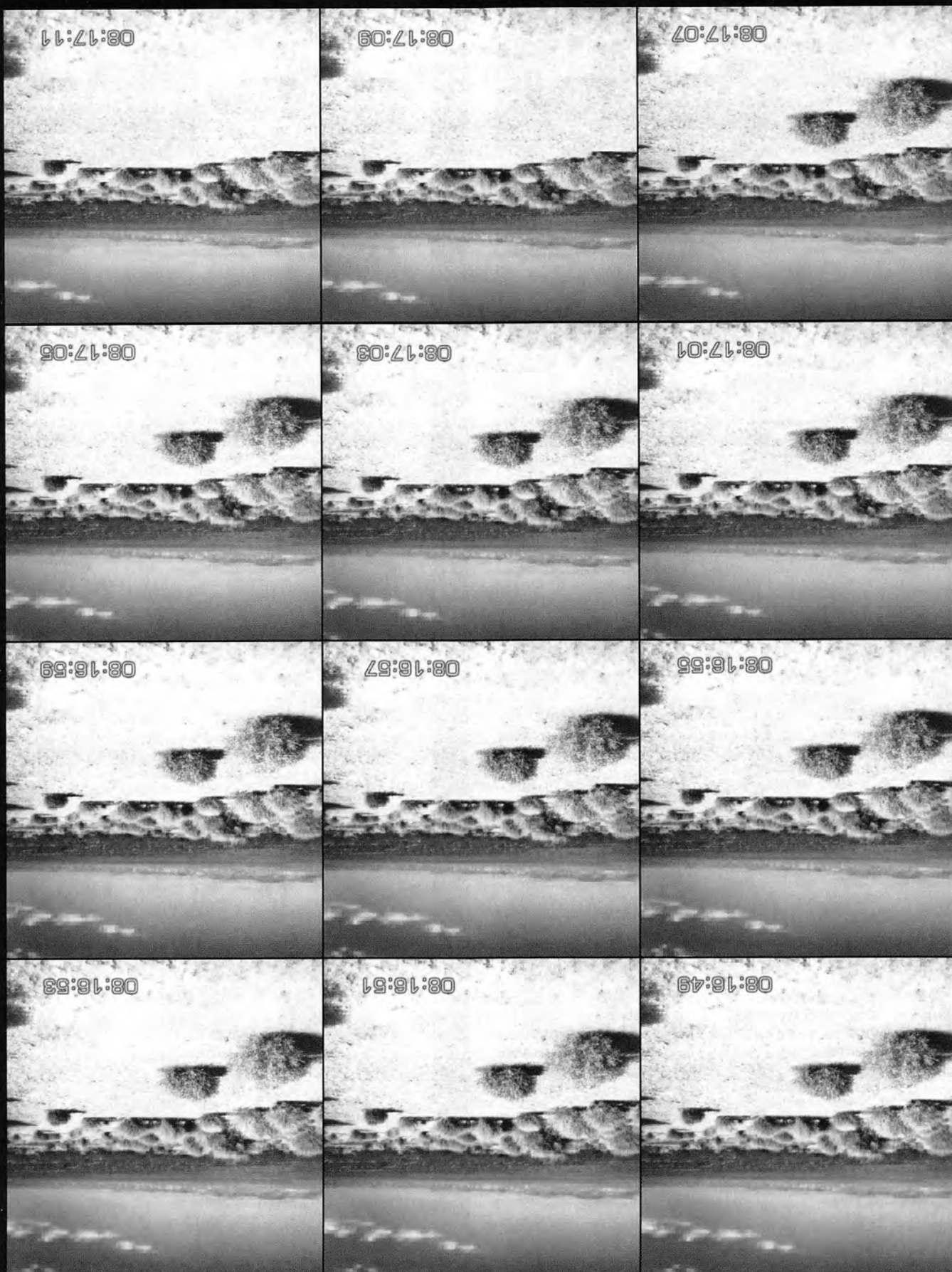
RIDE, RIDE LIKE THE WIMP

CHRISTOPHER CROSS

After selling more than four million copies of his 1979 self-titled debut, crafting the first-ballot Wussy Hall of Fame ballad "Sailing" and sweeping the Grammys in every major category, this doughy, falsetto-voiced Texan guarantees sophomore slumpage by appearing on the back cover of his 1983 follow-up wearing a pink suit. Two decades later, Seth MacFarlane names pudgy, hopelessly awkward son on *Family Guy* Christopher Cross Griffin.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: "Think of Laura" becomes the unofficial love theme to *General Hospital* in 1983.

do you have what it takes?



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SIDE A

DEBBY BOONE

"YOU LIGHT UP MY LIFE" 1977
Won the Grammy for Best New Artist. Ah, that Grammy credibility.

MICHAEL JACKSON

"SHE'S OUT OF MY LIFE" 1979
At the end, he starts to sob and snivel. No wonder she left you, bitch!

DAN HILL

"SOMETIMES WHEN WE TOUCH" 1977
"I wanna hold you 'til I die." Say Dan, have you met Michael Jackson?

JAMES BLUNT

"YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL" 2005
This generation's Debby Boone, just not as pretty.

BREAD

"IF" 1971
Falsetto? Check. Acoustic guitar? Check. String section? Check. Dopey lyrics about the stars and eternal love? You don't need to ask.

CHICAGO

"YOU'RE THE INSPIRATION" 1984
Sullyng Lite-FM playlists since 1969—and still going.



MJ gets an idea for a nickname from his favorite shirt.



DAN FOGELBERG

"LONGER" 1980
Very popular as a wedding song. The Stu Hirsh Orchestra's version can't be worse than Fogelberg's.

CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG

"OUR HOUSE" 1970
Hippies were supposed to be dirty, not cutesy.

SIDE B

LIONEL RICHIE

"HELLO" 1984
The singer pledges eternal love to a woman he doesn't know. Right: He's a stalker.

LOGGINS & MESSINA

"DANNY'S SONG" 1972
Not all songs about newborn children are wretched. Actually, no, they are.

'N SYNC

"GOD MUST HAVE SPENT A LITTLE MORE TIME ON YOU" 1998
The chief reason Justin went solo. "You want me to sing what?"

CAPTAIN & TENNILLE

"MUSKRAT LOVE" 1976
Two grownups imitate the sound of canoodling rodents.

STEVIE WONDER

"I JUST CALLED TO SAY I LOVE YOU" 1984
And that's why we have Caller ID.

TAYLOR HICKS

"DO I MAKE YOU PROUD" 2006
Even Clay Aiken could whoop his ass.

AIR SUPPLY

"ALL OUT OF LOVE" 1980
Proof that Australians can whimper in falsetto just like Michael Jackson.

SIMON & GARFUNKEL

"SCARBOROUGH FAIR" 1966
They thought using a harpsichord was classy. Change *cla* to *wu* and they were right. ROB TANNENBAUM



14

MILD WORLD

CAT STEVENS

After scoring his first hit with a song called "I Love My Dog," Stevens spent the next decade whining about the sex-symbol status conferred upon him by his brooding good looks and über-sensitive folk-pop. Maudlin, self-righteous tunes like "Moonshadow" and "Father and Son" answer problems both personal and political with a smug, don't-worry-be-happy shrug, as if Cat were willing to wallow in his misery but not do anything about it.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: He had his girlfriend, actress Patti D'Arbanville, snatched away by Mick Jagger, then wrote a song, "Lady D'Arbanville," about his undying love for her. She didn't come back.

13

TWEE ARE THE WORLD

BELLE AND SEBASTIAN

Inspiring slavish devotion from cardigan-clad legions of poetry majors, this Scottish chamber-pop collective are like the Smiths but without all the macho posturing. Named after a French kiddie show, the painfully shy band refused to appear in publicity photos for years, instead using a picture of an anonymous girl.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: Hypersensitive bandleader Stuart Murdoch tells biographer Paul Whitelaw, "Great words almost always reduce me to tears. It's a relief to know that beauty can exist."

12

THE "HEIDILY-HO" HIPPIE

GRAHAM NASH

Even famous semi-wuss George Harrison called the neat-combed Nash's music "soulless." As leader of the Hollies, a squeaky rendition of the Beatles, he incited the hatred of his peers: Screaming Lord Sutch crowned them "diabolical." He then joined David Crosby and Stephen Stills in a grandiose supergroup and turned hippie ideals into the Mommy & Me melody of "Our House" and the chicken-soup platitudes of "Teach Your Children." Smug and sanctimonious, Nash is the Ned Flanders of rock & roll, mustache included.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: The 53 consecutive "la-la-las" he trills halfway through "Our House"

11

SCHLOCK HORROR

BARRY MANILOW

His debut album opened with a cutesy recording of the infant Manilow singing along with his grandpa. Remarkably, Manilow's oeuvre got progressively less rocking from then on. His subsequent albums offer a torrential outpouring of gloopy ballads so sugary and unbearable that councillors in the Sydney suburb of Rockdale recently announced plans to play it through outdoor speakers in order to disperse gangs of antisocial teenagers from their streets.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: "Her name was Lola/She was a showgirl ..."



Manilow, dressed for Halloween as Captain Kirk's hairdresser.

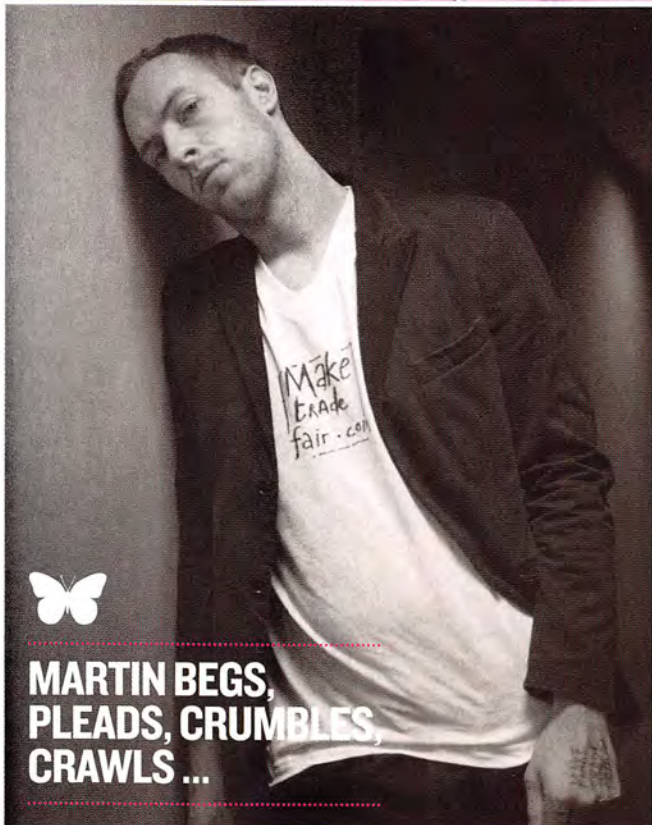


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Hilary Duff shields herself from Chris Martin's tears.



**MARTIN BEGS,
PLEADS, CRUMBLES,
CRAWLS ...**

10

FIZZY MCGUIRE

HILARY DUFF

Duff was tween-pop's Breck Girl—a sex- and drug-free sprite best summed up by the name of her next movie character: Sunshine Goodness. Then, when the whole Disney thing got old, she remade herself as a punk by donning black nail varnish and dating one of the Good Charlotte twins. Nancy Spungen she ain't.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: In 2004, smack in the middle of a nasty catfight with Lindsay Lohan, Duff told *Blender*, “I just want us to be friends.”

9

ALL YELLOW

CHRIS MARTIN

It's not his posh background. It's not that he went to college. It's not that he played field hockey there. It's not his teetotalling or the fact he was a virgin until 22. (Okay, it's a little of

that.) What really makes Chris Martin so drippy are those needy, apologetic tunes: He begs, he pleads, he crumbles, he crawls, he's lost, he's scared, he's sorry and he misses you. Plus: He plays a girl's instrument.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: Being derided as “a bit wimpy” by noted ruffian Charlotte Church.

8

FACE THE MUZAK

BABYFACE

Ever since his late-'80s ascendance, Kenneth “Babyface” Edmonds has sought to take the bump and grind out of R&B and replace it with gentle, easy-listening melodies and Dr. Phil-worthy affirmations. The Barry Manilow-loving songwriter-producer-performer writes about love with the soft-focus banality of a guy born to pen Hallmark cards and sings as if he's trying not to wake his grandma in the next room.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: Writing an album's worth of tunes about the struggles of being a love-starved middle-aged woman for the *Waiting to Exhale* soundtrack.

7

HONKY-TONK HOKUM

RASCAL FLATTS

With their boy-band looks and lyrics saccharine enough to induce comas even in non-diabetics, this chart-busting country trio exemplify New Nashville at its most heavy-handed and least roughneck. “Anything that can be played at a wedding is probably going to be a hit,” justifies awesomely monikered lead singer Gary LeVox.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: Their 2004 single “Skin,” the video for which features Cirque du Soleil, is about a cancer patient named Sarabeth who fears her chemotherapy-related hair loss will keep her from dancing at the prom. It does not.

6

BAD SAX

KENNY G

As the leading perpetrator of the crime against humanity commonly known as “smooth jazz,” this pube-headed soprano saxophonist/walking punchline may be the very poster boy of wussiness. Despite sagely preparing himself to spend a lifetime in nerdery by graduating with an accounting degree, this Albert Einstein of the bland instead chose to pursue music—and has since sold more than 45 million

albums of dentist-friendly instrumental pap. Loathed even by other smooth-jazzbos such as purist Pat Metheny, his cover of "My Heart Will Go On" makes Celine Dion sound like Courtney Love.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: The David Blaine of elevator music, G-Unit made the Guinness Book of World Records for holding an E-flat note for an agonizing 45+ minutes.

5

ALONG COMES A WOMAN

PETER CETERA

It's not as though Chicago were exactly hardcore thugs before he became their focal point, but under Cetera's dictatorship they purged their jazzier impulses to concentrate full-bore on self-pitying schmaltz like "If You Leave Me Now" and "Hard to Say I'm Sorry." That was merely a warm-up for a solo career so flaccid that on his Amy Grant duet, "The Next Time I Fall," the milquetoast Christian pop balladeer sounds tough by comparison.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: His unconvincing stab at chivalry, "Glory of Love," actually felt too mawkish for *The Karate Kid Part II*.



Boyz II Men: "Omigod—I'm wearing an argyle cardigan and cords, too!"

4

BOYZ NEXT DOOR

BOYZ II MEN

Never mind the quasi-thuggish "z" in their name—these Philly melismatics are about as gangsta as crying in your pillow. Four early-'90s R&B heartthrobs with an image more wholesome than fortified milk, they crooned their way to more than 25 million in sales and set the stage for all the boy bands who followed.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: The please-forgive-me-baby No. 1 smash "On Bended Knee," which singlehandedly set men back at least 10 years.

3

LEADER OF THE BLAND

DAN FOGELBERG

Through the '70s and early '80s, the weedy-voiced Fogelberg was the bard of choice for doe-eyed, turtle-necked white guys who were convinced that showing their sensitive side and/or growing a beard would increase their chances of getting laid. And while his sentimental tunes consistently sounded like Poco outtakes, he insisted he was more influenced by classical composers like Tchaikovsky.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: His tribute to his "papa," "Leader of the Band."

2

98° AND FALLING

NICK LACHEY

Granted, if we'd been dumped by Jessica Simpson, we'd probably be pretty bummed, too. But Lachey's new D-I-V-O-R-C-E album wallows in so much misery and self-pity it makes Morrissey sound like the Pussycat Dolls. "There's only so many tears that you can cry," the ex-Newlywed sobs on one track. Let's hope he's right—for everyone's sake.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: The whimpering piano ballad "What's Left of Me." Apparently, it's not his manhood.



Kenny G's got wood... wind.

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**AND
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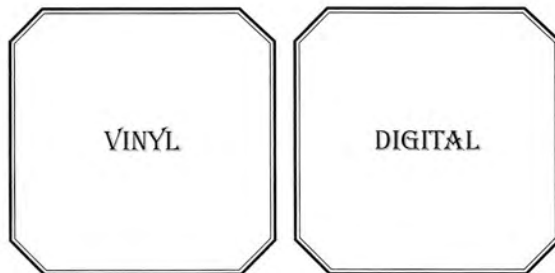
MR. SENSITIVITY

JAMES TAYLOR

Like pro wrestlers, some musicians have cool nicknames: Jerry Lee Lewis is "The Killer" and Jerry Butler was "The Iceman." But James Taylor calls himself "Sweet Baby James." And we know what babies do, right? They cry all the goddamn time. Setting morbid boo-hoo-hoing tales of suicidal friends ("Fire and Rain") and visits to a mental institution ("Knockin' Round the Zoo") to lullaby melodies and soft-rocking acoustic guitar in a series of hits starting in 1970, this lanky, genial North Carolinian perfected what Elvis Costello once called "the 'Fuck me, I'm sensitive' school" of music. In the soft, caring, unruffled voice of a marriage counselor, he initiated an era of confessional, listen-to-my-troubles singer-songwriters and turned excessive self-examination into a hallmark of the baby-boom generation.

WUSSIEST MOMENT: His cover of "Summertime Blues," in which he takes on Eddie Cochran's yawp of frustration as if he wants to be the white Bill Cosby.





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Love” wasn’t sounding right. So I told him, ‘I got this melody, man, it’d be incredible for the ballad.’” He also says that LL resisted the idea. “He didn’t want to do it—back then they used the term ‘going out like a sucker.’”

In any case, Ervin recorded the basic track with his L.A. Posse partner Dwayne Simon and engineer Steve Ett. The backlash started almost instantly, when a friend of LL’s came to visit the studio and sniffed that the song’s simple keyboard melody sounded like Christmas music. (Ervin ended up calling LL at 4:00 in the morning to convince him that “I Need Love” really was great.) It was a hard sell for Def Jam, too. According to Stacy Guereseva’s book *Def Jam, Inc.*, label bigwigs Rick Rubin and Bill Stephney hated “I Need Love,” while label head Russell Simmons called it “homo, New Edition bullshit.”

Simmons would later claim he’d known the song was a hit from the get-go; “Russell hated everything, but he was a brilliant businessman,” Ervin says. “He knew that this was LL’s ace in the hole.” Even LL noted that releasing “I Need Love” was “a real risk for me then. I could have come off as soft. But obviously the listeners didn’t think so—the record sales and money started rolling in.”

LL headlined the Def Jam tour that summer, with a stage set including a couch, which he humped every night during “I Need Love”—in Georgia he was arrested for “public lewdness.” But the roses, entreaties and pelvic thrusting did the trick. On September 26, 1987, “I Need Love” became the first hip-hop track to hit No. 1 on *Billboard*’s Black Singles chart.

LL Cool J had just turned 19 years old in January, and he’d already set the tone for the bedroom-eyed hits he’s been scoring ever since—not to mention hip-hop ballads in general. “It was great to hear something like that coming from a guy like LL Cool J,” says Paul Wall, whose recent hit “Girl” is cut from the same sweaty, silken cloth as “I Need Love.” “For a rapper to admit that he’s fallen in love is taking a big step.” [BLENDER]



LADIES LOVE COOL James: That’s what James Todd Smith’s stage name stands for, and he loves them right back. Maybe a little too much. In his autobiography, *I Make My Own Rules*, he reminisces about spying on the girls’ bathroom in school, fantasizing about his aunt and representing

LL COOL J WAS ARRESTED FOR HUMPING A COUCH.

Queens with pretty much every groupie in the Northern Hemisphere—although he claims he never doffed his trademark Kangol during sex until he met his future wife Simone: He always wore a hat, literally.

On his records, though, LL introduced him-

self as a tough guy. At the age of 16, LL signed to the new hip-hop label Def Jam and released his first single, “I Need a Beat.” For his second album, 1987’s *Bigger and Deffer*, he worked with the L.A. Posse, a group of producers and DJs including Bobby “Bobcat” Ervin. Most of it was “hard as hell,” as he famously barked, but for one crucial track, LL turned his voice down to a sensual purr; pulled his shirt off and revealed his sensitive side, “clean and unsoiled yet sweaty and wet.”

“I Need Love” wasn’t the first love rap LL had recorded—his 1985 debut record, *Radio*, had included “I Can Give You More”—but it was the first time he’d made a record that sounded like smooth R&B. “I had this tune in my head for days,” he has recalled. “I hummed it for Bobcat and the engineer.”

Ervin, though, tells *Blender* that the tune was originally a song called “Friends By Day, Lovers By Night” that he’d written for an L.A. R&B group. “I used [Run-D.M.C. DJ] Jam Master Jay’s records to do the album, because I didn’t have all my records from L.A. I was trying to keep it hip-hop and street, and “I Need

VITAL STATISTICS

SONG “I Need Love”

ARTIST LL Cool J

LABEL Def Jam

WRITTEN BY Bobby “Bobcat” Ervin, Darryl Pierce, Dwayne Simon and James Todd Smith

PRODUCERS L.A. Posse, DJ Pooh

RELEASED August 1987

HIGHEST CHART POSITION 1 (R&B), 14 (pop)



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I HEARD PRETENDERS SINGER CHRISSIE HYNDE WAS ALMOST SHOT AS A VIETNAM WAR PROTESTER. WHAT'S THE STORY?

CARA KYLE, MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

It's not as if bullets were whizzing over her head, but Hynde did have a front-row seat to one of the most infamous ballistic episodes in the antiwar movement. A native of Akron, Ohio, she was a freshman art major at nearby Kent State University in 1970 when National Guard troops opened fire on student demonstrators, killing four. The incident later inspired Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's bitter antiwar classic "Ohio" and helped turn the tide against the Nixon administration and its policies.

"It was a big mistake," Hynde said of the shooting in a 2000 interview. "I don't know why [the guardsmen] were standing there armed at all. Students were going to turn in their folders for half-term on a normal Monday morning."

Interestingly, she wasn't the only future rock star on campus that morning. Mark Mothersbaugh and Jerry Casale, founding members of new wave misanthropes Devo, were also students at Kent State. Mothersbaugh and Hynde were even briefly in a band together. "I think that day was the basis for why I created Devo," Casale said a few years ago. "I couldn't have been more changed. Any peace-and-love hippie was gone."

MY FRIEND TOLD ME THE GERMAN BAND RAMMSTEIN RECORDED A SONG ABOUT A PLANE CRASH WITH THE ACTUAL SCREAMS OF THE VICTIMS IN THE BACKGROUND. DO YOU KNOW WHICH SONG IT IS?

KRISTOPHER GIBBS, OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI

Sorry. That ol' dying-person-caught-on-tape yarn is a rock & roll evergreen, dating back at least to

ONE OF MY FAVORITE TRACKS ON FALL OUT BOY'S LAST CD IS "OUR LAWYER MADE US CHANGE THE NAME OF THIS SONG SO WE WOULDN'T GET SUED." DID THAT REALLY HAPPEN?

ALEXANDRIA CALVERT, WASHINGTON, D.C.

It did. According to bassist Pete Wentz, the original title was "My Name Is David Ruffin and These Are the Temptations." It was intended as a sly commentary on the hazards of celebrity: Ruffin was the lead singer of Motown giants the Temptations until his

ballooning ego (he insisted on arriving at shows in a private, mink-lined limousine) and troublesome coke habit got him booted out. The last straw came when he started demanding they be billed as "David Ruffin and the Temptations"—exactly the kind of power trip Fall Out Boy wanted to mock.

But that title also would have prompted a huge lawsuit from Ruffin's estate. (The singer died of a cocaine overdose in 1991.) "The label was willing to let us sign a waiver so only we'd be sued," Wentz tells *Blender*. "But then our lawyer told us it would cost more private jets and money-filled swimming pools than you could ever imagine."

Preferring not to send their royalties to the same guy they had set out to skewer in the first place, the band decided to big-up their legal team instead. Case closed!



Can you tell which Fall Out Boy is exposing himself?



the Ohio Players' "Love Rollercoaster" in 1975. That song was famously rumored to contain the screams of a woman being fatally stabbed either just outside the band's studio or in an apartment next door. Some versions went so far as to have the Players' manager committing the dastardly

deed; others blamed an unknown assailant who would never be captured. The only problem is that none of it's, you know, true.

The Rammstein story stems from the fact that the industrial rockers named themselves after Ramstein, a U.S. Air Force base in Germany that was the site of a notorious air-show tragedy. During a stunt demonstration in August 1988, three Italian planes collided in midair and crashed into the crowd below, killing 70 people and injuring 400 more.

The band alluded to this disaster in a 1995 song—also called "Rammstein"—that included lines about "the smell of flesh" and the particularly cheery image of "a mass grave." But the rumor that their "Wollt Ihr Das Bett In Flammen Sehen" (translation: "Do You Want to See the Bed in Flames") features the recorded screams of the dying spectators, while suitably chilling, is unfounded. [BLENDER]

DID KISS REALLY PUBLISH A COMIC BOOK PRINTED IN THEIR OWN BLOOD?

JEROME PAYNE, FENWICK ISLAND, DELAWARE

Freakishly, yes. When Marvel Comics wanted to launch a title featuring a rock band in the late '70s, the glam-pop gods of Kiss—with their flashy costumes and face-painted alter-egos—were a natural choice. The first installment of their comic appeared in June 1977, introducing readers to the Marvel Universe's four newest superheroes: the Demon (a.k.a. bassist Gene Simmons), who could fly and breathe fire; the Space Ace (guitarist Ace Frehley), who could teleport; the Starchild (guitarist Paul Stanley), who had the power of telepathy; and the Cat (drummer Peter Criss), who had the strength and agility of an adolescent western lowland gorilla. (Just kidding. It was a cat.)

As an added promotional gimmick, someone at Marvel suggested that the band donate a

The closest most comic-book readers will ever get to a kiss.

little genuine Kiss blood to be mixed in with the comic's red ink. Never ones to shy away from a stunt, they agreed, and during a break in their world tour flew to the company's printing plant in Buffalo to pour in the vital fluid while a gaggle of reporters watched. When *Kiss No. 1* was released a month later, it included a special section called "Blood on the Plates," detailing the sanguinary creation process and featuring a sworn statement of authenticity from a notary public. It remained Marvel's bestselling issue until *X-Men No. 1* supplanted it in 1991.



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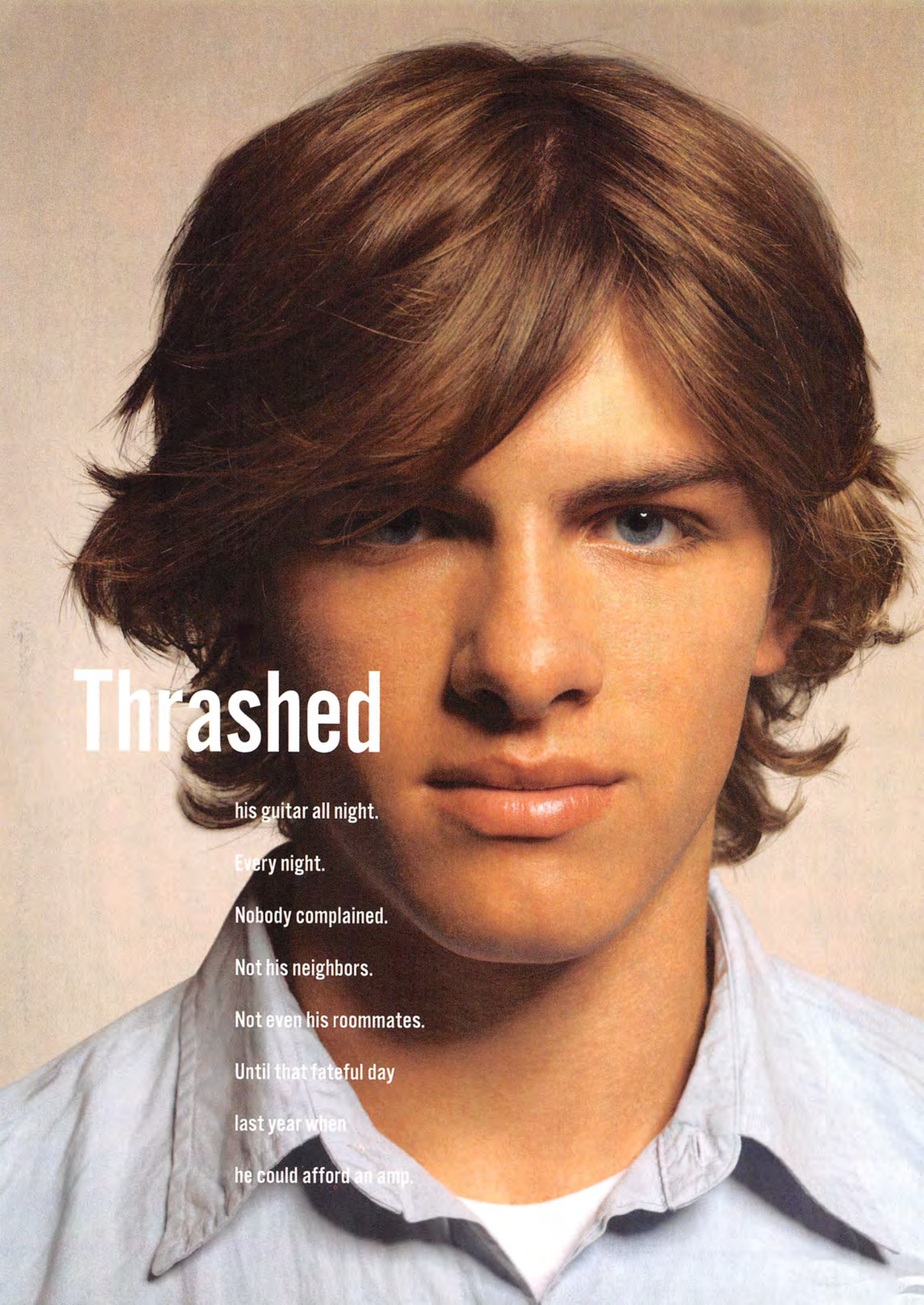
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last year when

he could afford an amp.



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HE MAY COME OFF LIKE A SPACE-CASE ONSCREEN, BUT WITH EVERY FILMMAKER—AND STARLET—AT HIS BECK AND CALL, **OWEN WILSON** MIGHT BE THE SMARTEST MAN IN HOLLYWOOD. PLUS, HE WAS NOMINATED FOR AN OSCAR—WERE YOU NOMINATED FOR AN OSCAR?

BY MEREDITH KAHN ROLLINS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIN SCHOELLER

★ ★ ★

IT'S A WEIRDLY chilly summer afternoon in Santa Monica, California, and Owen Wilson wants to go swimming. Massive ocean waves are crashing along the pier; the water temperature is hovering around a toe-numbing 65 degrees; the sky is gray and thick with fog.

There is no sense to it, really.

Wilson pulls into a beachfront parking lot and hops out of his Prius with his stubby-legged Australian cattle dog, Garcia, bounding through the half-open backseat window. Behind him is a girlfriend who he insists is an ex, despite their flirty banter: Carolina Cerisola, a pixie-sexy dancer with a starring gig at the L.A. burlesque club Forty Deuce. They're met by Owen's older brother Andrew—bearded and smiley, with the same ruggedly high Wilson cheekbones—and Andrew's son, Joey, age 7.

The fog keeps rolling in. "Isn't this great?" Owen asks, with his familiar goofy enthusiasm, as the wind whips up the sand. Andrew changes into his bathing suit under a towel. Owen takes off →



Never wash
your poodles with
your dunks.



And that was the last time those kids ever saw their skateboard. And their motorcycle.

his light blue long-sleeve shirt, revealing an under-exercised, pale and freckly chest and a faded four-leaf-clover tattoo on one shoulder. Carolina shivers and does a foxy little Rocky Balboa shadowbox on the sand, trying to keep warm. She strips down to a tiny bikini (she's Argentinean) and the three of them run into the surf. Within seconds they're all but invisible, little heads bobbing out in the waves.

Joey stays on the shore and shakes his head in a mix of amazement and wisdom. "I don't go in there with them anymore," he says. No wonder; it looks nuts.



IT'S FITTING, MAYBE even trite, for the man who has cornered the market on beach-bum charm to show off his bona fides on the crummiest swimming day in recent Southern California history. Although the 37-year-old has technically played a surfer only once (in the little-seen caper *The Big Bounce*), Wilson's signature nasal drawl, shaggy sun-bleached hair and slackerly attitude has made him the perfect comic sidekick, one of the best things to come out of the recent rush of genial comedy blockbusters: *Shanghai Noon* and *Shanghai Knights*, *Zoolander*, *Starsky and Hutch*, *Meet the Parents* and *Meet the Fockers*, and last year's mega-hit *Wedding Crashers*, starring Vince Vaughn and Wilson as neurotic lotharios looking for love at other people's nuptials.

Wilson currently stars in *You, Me and Dupree*, playing his usual is-he-stoned-or-just-a-little-stupid wiseacre cad, this time as Randy

Dupree, a down-on-his-luck guy who moves in with his best childhood friend (Matt Dillon) and his friend's new bride (Kate Hudson) and screws up their happy home. Wilson reportedly earns upwards of \$10 million per movie these days, and while studio heads inexplicably persist in bingeing on preposterous star salaries like crackheads playing Powerball, Wilson

★ **WILSON'S ONSCREEN PERSONA IS A GENIUS COMBINATION OF CLUELESSNESS AND TOTAL EXUBERANCE.**

may be the safest bet this side of Wolverine. There's something irresistibly alluring about his onscreen persona: a genius combination of cluelessness and total exuberance with a little bit of earnest, soulful underdog mixed in—an American hero of the Spicoli school.

"I think he's one of the more universally accessible comedic voices we have," says Joe Russo, who with his brother Anthony directed *You, Me and Dupree*. "He finds a way to marry an absurdist physical comedy that appeals to children with a very witty, sly verbal humor that appeals to adults." Part of the fun of watching

Wilson work is that he seems to be so squarely in the middle of his comfort zone; while everyone else around him is acting, Wilson just effortlessly is.

But he's had such a long string of hits playing exactly this kind of dim bulb that it's easy to forget that he's the not-such-an-idiot-savant who co-wrote, with director Wes Anderson, a super-smart, brilliantly idiosyncratic trio of art-house hits: *Bottle Rocket*, *Rushmore* and *The Royal Tenenbaums*. As his close friend, music producer Rick Rubin, notes: "You may somewhere find some part of Owen Wilson in some of his roles, but he's really intelligent and really self-aware—and most of the characters he plays aren't."

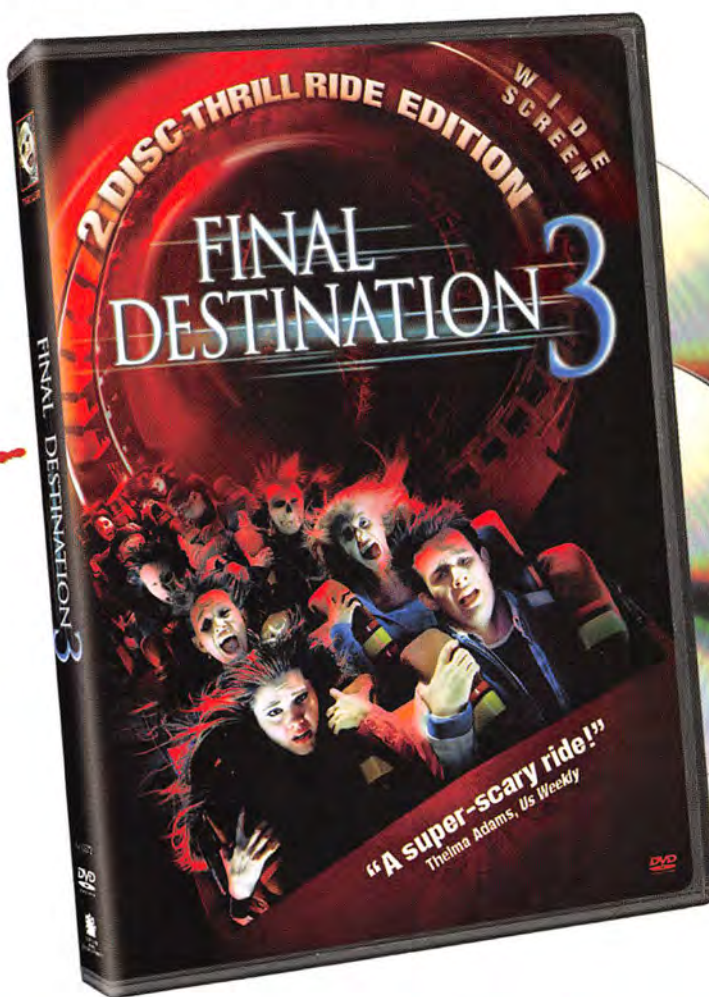
Wilson himself admits that he's been pegged. "People will always say that they see me as the laid-back, surfer, stoner-type thing, which is ..." he trails off. "I don't know. I guess it's just being from Texas, and talking in a deliberate—I would say thoughtful—way, but other people would say it's slow." This theory doesn't entirely hold water: His younger brother, Luke, also a movie star, has pretty much the same voice and intonation, and the stoner stigma doesn't seem to have stuck to him. "Yeah!" Wilson agrees, perking up at the thought. "Why is that, I wonder? Maybe it's having longer hair, blonder hair." He honks his honking laugh. "Maybe I'm a victim of my hair color."

Or perhaps it's just that it's simpler to play the loveable fool; audiences certainly aren't complaining. *Wedding Crashers* took in \$285 million at the box office worldwide. "Maybe →

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I'd have more range if I was forced to try something," he admits, "but I'm probably more inclined to do something that I recognize."

"You know," muses Rubin, "I don't even know if he really thinks of himself as an actor. He just does what he does."



IT'S NOT TOO surprising to learn that Owen Wilson didn't set out to be an actor. "I wanted to go to West Point as a little kid—I was really into army stuff. And then after age 12 or so I thought I'd go into advertising, because that's what my dad did. But no job offer was forthcoming from my father," he notes, laughing. "If you had asked me as a kid, did I want to be an actor, I would have said, 'Wow, that sounds like a fun thing to do.' But to have said, 'Yes, I want to be an actor,' would have sounded impossible, and kind of vain, and..." He pauses, searching for a word, and squinches up his eyes. "Presumptuous."

Wilson had the kind of upper-middle-class childhood that could just as well have launched him far, far away from showbiz. He grew up the middle child, between Andrew and Luke, in a well-manicured section of Dallas, with parents who were on the fringes of a glamorous life. His father, Robert, an ad executive, ran the local PBS affiliate station in the '70s and produced documentaries; his mother, Laura, a well-regarded fine-art photographer, assisted the famous Richard Avedon, doing advance work on his shoots. They were transplanted Northeast intellectuals who emphasized culture and good manners. Wilson was trained to answer the phone with: "Wilson residence, Owen Cunningham Wilson speaking."

The Wilson brothers swam in the local ponds, played sports (his mangled nose is the result of two breaks, one from a football accident) and took it easy. As kids, Owen and Luke started a lawn-mowing service called the Lawn Rangers, and their dad, says Wilson, "being an ad guy, got really excited about designing T-shirts for us. So he made up a ton of them. And since my mom was working for Avedon at the time, there were even models in New York wearing Lawn Rangers T-shirts!" And yet, he admits in a tone of bemused sheepishness, "We never actually mowed any lawns."

A thread of this no-work ethic runs through Wilson's biography: In tenth grade he was kicked out of the posh St. Marks School of Texas for stealing his geometry teacher's edition book so he could ace his math homework. (He spent the final two years of high school at the New Mexico Military Institute—his choice.) Later, despite five years at the University of Texas at Austin, he couldn't quite get it together to take his final two courses, so he never graduated.

Instead, he worked on the *Bottle Rocket* script with Wes Anderson, his senior-year roommate at UT. Through friends of Wilson's parents, they sent a short of the movie and the script to a Hollywood producer, and from there

THE TAO OF OWEN

FROM COWBOY TO DIVORCE MEDIATOR TO OIL-DRILLING ASTRONAUT, THE ZEN-LIKE WISDOM OF THE DUDE'S DUDE

"I'm like a wild horse—you can't tame me. You put the oats in the pen, though, and I'll come in for a nibble every day. But if you ever shut that gate, I'll jump the fence and you'll never see me again."

ROY O'BANNON, *SHANGHAI NOON*

"I wasn't like every other kid, who dreams about being an astronaut. I was always more interested in what bark was made out of on a tree."

HANSEL, *ZOOLANDER*

"Is it just me or does the jungle make you really, really horny?"

GARY DIXON, *ANACONDA*

"You know how they say we only use 10% of our brains? I think we only use 10% of our hearts."

JOHN BECKWITH, *WEDDING CRASHERS*



Owen Wilson is so hot right now.

"On the run from Johnny Law: It ain't no trip to Cleveland."

DIGNAN, *BOTTLE ROCKET*



Above, the Wilson brothers, photographed by Mom in Cape Cod, 1976. Left, Andrew, Luke and Owen in 2005.

and Luke in it, and the boys from Texas suddenly had a critically praised Tinseltown calling card. It didn't do big box office, but no less than Martin Scorsese named it one of the 10 best films of the '90s.

And *Bottle Rocket* introduced the world to the character type that Wilson has played pretty steadily through the 20-odd movies that have followed. As Dignan, a would-be thief and all-around putz, Owen exudes the mix of the nutty and the familiar that makes you laugh at him, and then think, "Oh, I know that guy." Owen gets all the fireworks and hilarity; Luke gets the girl.



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OWEN MOVED TO Los Angeles for good at age 24 and seamlessly adapted from landlocked Dallas to beachfront living. He currently resides in Santa Monica, on a quiet street in a house completely hidden by a high, dense hedge. Andrew and Luke both have homes nearby. Their Uncle Joe, who worked as a contractor in Nova Scotia before joining his nephews in L.A., shares the house with Owen. "He came to visit me on the set of *Behind Enemy Lines*," Wilson says, "and then he just moved in." And now Uncle Joe (whom everybody calls Uncle Joe) is helping Wilson with the house he's building in Malibu.

It's a happy off-set routine for Wilson. There are evening swims by the Santa Monica pier, bike rides down to Venice, dinner at Baja Fresh. Lots of reading: biographies, World War II histories, *The New Yorker*. The Internet is riddled with local sightings of the actor—usually barefoot—poking into bookstores, Garcia close behind.

The barefoot thing seems a little Britney Spears, frankly.

"Well," he notes with a little grin, "Louisiana is very close to Texas."

In fact he's barefoot now, having left the beach for dinner at Cha Cha Chicken, one of his favorite taco stands. He is very relaxed, refreshed from his swim, saying a familiar "Hi" to the cooks behind the counter and apologizing profusely to a group of star-struck girls when he realizes he's accidentally cut ahead of them in line.

Seated in a corner of the patio at a picnic table and wolfing an enchilada, he could pass as a local guy, some nobody. Except, that is, for the fact that the other patrons keep taking pictures of him with their camera phones. He wears his celebrity lightly; none of this seems to particularly bother him. "There are some good things about it," he says. "The idea that you'd go someplace and put people in a good mood just by seeing you. And their good mood puts you in a good mood, so that's a win-win."

Of course there is a less palatable side to his fame, which is inextricably tied to his other off-set pastime: Loving the ladies. He's a confirmed bachelor, his coy back-and-forth with Carolina notwithstanding, and he hasn't had a serious relationship for a couple of years. There was Sheryl Crow back in 1999, Carolina in 2004 and then ... well ... a lot of fun times at the Playboy Mansion. A lot of them.

"What can I say? I'm single," he says, leaning as far back in his seat as he can get without actually lying on the floor. The fact that girls like him is no surprise: He isn't exactly classically hot—a little too squinty, a little too pouty—but there's something about him that's very approachable, between the self-deprecating wit and the aw-shucks sweetness. You can't quite tell if he's a jerk or the man you want to spend the rest of your life with.

"I think it has to do with the mischievous look he gets in his eyes," says Kate Hudson, his co-star in *Dupree*. "It's the old cliché, that every

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ANSWERS: (1) BARBRA STREISAND; (2) ADRIEN BRODY; (3) BOB HOPE; (4) MICHAEL JACKSON; (5) KARL MALDEN; (6) DUSTIN HOFFMAN



Hey, eyes forward!
Luke and Owen
during the making of
Bottle Rocket.

★ **"PEOPLE ALWAYS SAY THEY SEE ME AS THE LAID-BACK, SURFER, STONER TYPE. I GUESS IT'S JUST BEING FROM TEXAS."**

OWEN WILSON

woman wants a man with a sense of humor. But you can talk to him about practically anything. And he's an adventurer—that's a really attractive quality. He always wants to try new things and travel." She chuckles, pretty hard. "Boy, let me tell ya, you hear that the ladies love him, and I can tell you firsthand: The ladies love him. I mean, it's unbelievable."

In fact, so many ladies have loved Wilson

that he has earned the moniker the Butter-scotch Stallion, which started online and has been happily adapted by the media outlets that have followed him closely in the wake of *Wedding Crashers*. It's a pretty brilliant nickname, cutting and corny all at once. For a while, Owen seemed to have agreed, and he was happy to think deep thoughts in print about his many conquests. One sample, from last summer: "I didn't realize that I have such a strong scientific side that demands I experiment with and compare women."

But Wilson doesn't see the fun of it anymore, having felt burned by some of the more scandalous tales that have circulated through the gossip columns. He now takes a pretty hard line about not talking about his sex life—the nickname, the partying, anything.

Okay, he'll talk about the Playboy Mansion. While he'll allow that it loses some of its wonder after "the twentieth time," he still hasn't lost that excitement. "It's the Playboy Mansion," he explains. "It just has a hold on your imagination from growing up. Like, in the same way that you might say that it's the right thing as a kid to complain about the cafeteria food, it's the right thing as an adult to say you like the Playboy Mansion." He starts to crack up. "Even if you didn't like the Playboy Mansion, saying you didn't like it sounds almost un-American!"

And he'll listen with curiosity to a retelling of another story that's been making the rounds:

A guy (not Wilson) has a long-standing fling, a pretty girl who calls him every →



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week or so to hook up. One night, she calls and invites him over, and when he gets out of his car and crosses the street to her apartment, he sees Owen Wilson crossing the street, too. He and Wilson walk into the same building. They both get in the elevator. They get off at the same floor. They turn the same way down the hall. And then they end up in front of the same door. The door of the hot, available girl.

At which point, the tale goes, Wilson steps aside and says: "You go ahead. I've got a few more options tonight."

Great story, right? Wilson has been leaning in intently, and says, when it's over, "Not true," almost under his breath. He perks up, turns it over in his head. "But you had me! I was on the edge of my seat like, 'What happened?'" He starts to laugh, again, and deadpans, "I doubt I would be that generous."



WILSON SEEMS TO enjoy the spoils of fame—the sexploits, the travels, the inevitable collection of houses and vehicles. He's far less cavalier about his professional success. He makes a point of injecting his sensibility into each of his films, which is part of the reason that he's carved out some great moments in even his lowest-denominator projects (*Anaconda*, anyone?). "He's such a good writer that you get all these different layers of content," says Jay Roach, who directed him in *Meet the Parents* and *Meet the Fockers*. "He can find poetry in characters that are often written very thin." In fact, Roach's favorite line in *Meet the Parents* was a Wilson ad-lib, when Wilson's character, in the hopes of winning back his girlfriend, builds an ornate altar for his sister's wedding. "She tells him how amazing it is," Roach recalls, "and he says, 'Oh, thanks. I carved it myself out of one piece of wood.' It's hilarious, and at first I thought it might be too ridiculous. But because he says it in such a calm way, you believe him."

Nevertheless, Wilson can't stand to watch his movies, and only does so under the deepest duress. "It just never seems very good," he explains. "The stuff that was so funny or interesting to me on the day when I was doing it, when I see it, it seems like amateur night in Dixie." He smiles, a little sadly. "But it's weird: I don't like watching Luke in things either, and Wes [Anderson] just did an AmEx commercial and I haven't wanted to see it. I get too nervous watching myself and people close to me. I want so much for them to do well."

Stifling self-consciousness is also to blame for his dry spell, writing-wise. Despite raves for the three screenplays he wrote with Anderson—the pair received an Academy Award nomination for the *Royal Tenenbaums* script—he hasn't been able to sit down and pen another one. "I guess I just put pressure on myself with writing in a way that I don't with acting—if I write something, I really want it to be good. And that can kind of paralyze you," he says mournfully. "Plus, I always have these



As Dupree, the houseguest who won't leave, in *You, Me, and Dupree*.



As the drug-addled Eli Cash in *The Royal Tenenbaums*.



With Vince Vaughn in *Wedding Crashers*.

great hopes that I'll be productive in my downtime, but I never feel like doing anything." The breakup of the Anderson-Wilson team seems to have been Anderson's doing. "Wes felt that I wasn't ever available in the way I had been in the past," says Wilson, his voice quiet, trailing off. "Hopefully we'll write something together again."

★ **"YOU HEAR THAT THE LADIES LOVE HIM, AND I CAN TELL YOU FIRSTHAND: THE LADIES LOVE HIM."**

KATE HUDSON

In the meantime, he's contemplating a joint project with, of all people, the actor and hemp enthusiast Woody Harrelson. "We talked about trying to write something together in August, so maybe we will," Wilson says. "I mean, I don't know how productive we'll be." He laughs. "I think it'll be a lot of, 'Well, maybe we'll go for a swim now in the ocean, brainstorm a little bit out in the waves, and yeah, it's getting to be quittin' time, time to go get a beer. Tequila shot.'"

Which brings us to the other nagging Owen Wilson question: Nine times out of 10, the characters you play seem seriously baked. So, dude, just how big a stoner are you?

"I've never been a big pot smoker," he says with a nervous cough. But a friendship with Woody Harrelson? "With Woody!" he exclaims. "In the past few years I've become more open to it. The first couple times I tried, like in seventh grade, I never got that into it. I already thought a lot about what people would say, and I didn't need an extra thing that made me like, 'Now what the hell did that person mean when they said that?' It's only lately that I've become more open to smoking, and thinking that it's not that big a deal."

It's nice to hear that Wilson has moments in which he isn't so worried about what other people think. "There's a movie reviewer in San Francisco who just does not like me," he says. "He thinks I'm obnoxious, he doesn't like the sound of my voice. I guess some people just find me irritating." He chuckles. "They ain't buying what I'm selling!"

Wilson's a weird little map of contradictions: the self-critical neurotic who's never more brilliant than when he's making an ass of himself; the polite and thoughtful Southern mama's boy who has a penchant for the Playboy grotto; the ocean-loving, crunchily barefoot Prius driver who... leaves his car running, by accident, all through dinner.

"No way!" he shouts, as he walks into the parking lot and puts his hand on his car's humming hood. He looks around to see who's noticed, then quickly gets in and slams the door. "Oh, man. Oh, man."

And then, almost immediately, he's honking with laughter, that funny, unmistakable nasal haw-haw-haw.

"All the good of owning a Prius," he says, "right out the window." [BLENDER] →



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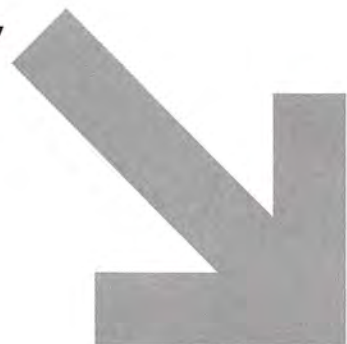


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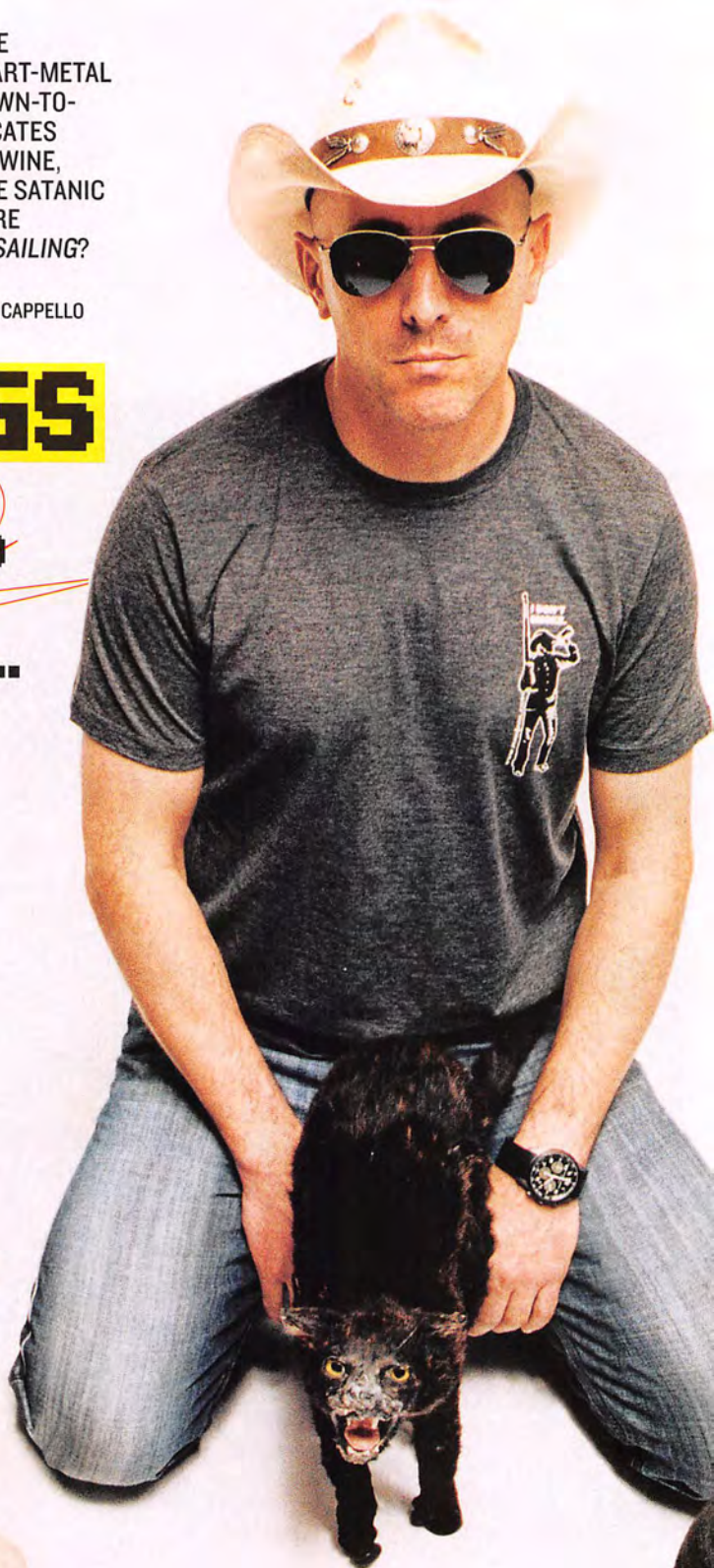
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Turns out these
chart-topping art-metal
weirdos are down-to-
earth sophisticates
who enjoy fine wine,
sailing and rare satanic
literature. We're
shocked, too—sailing?

By JON DOLAN
Photography by KENNETH CAPPELLO

33 THINGS

YOU
SHOULD
KNOW
ABOUT...



The lead singer always
lands the best pussy.
Tool, left to right: Danny
Carey, Maynard James
Keenan, Adam Jones,
Justin Chancellor.

**01****THEIR FRONTMAN WAS ON THE FRONT LINES**

Before he was a prog-goth guru, Maynard James Keenan was a restless teenager in sleepy Ravenna, Ohio, hungry to forge his own identity. So he joined the army. "They saw I could read and count, so I got an appointment to West Point," recalls Keenan. "I declined."

02**IF YOU THINK TOOL ARE FREAKY, MEET THEIR PARENTS**

Back in Paola, Kansas, future Tool drummer Danny Carey often noticed his dad doing odd things with swords in the backyard. Turned out Pops was a member of the Freemasons, a fraternal order who divide their time between running the world and reenacting Bible scenes in secret. "For 99% of those guys it was just an excuse to get away from their wives," says Carey.

03**THEY'RE SENSITIVE FOLK FANS**

They may sing about prison sex and severed vital organs, but they're really softies. In high school, Keenan hid his Joni Mitchell records from the other hard rockers. Today he's more open. "I've met her. She's what we in the art world call 'reclusive.'"

04**THEY STRESS OVER THEIR WIKI-PEDIA ENTRY**

The band's Wikipedia page states that Keenan met Tool guitarist Adam Jones through Rage Against the Machine shredder Tom Morello. "That is untrue," says Jones, who went to high school with Morello in Libertyville, Illinois. "We played together in a band called the Electric Sheep. We were terrible."



05

JONES LOVES THE GOVERNATOR

Before wielding an axe, Jones carried a mascara wand, the tool of a Hollywood makeup artist. His credits include *Jurassic Park* and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, during which he developed an admiration for Herr Schwarzenegger. "Arnold was a total pro, the kind of guy who'd do anything for a shot."

06

THEY DISCOVERED KEENAN'S CRAZY SINGING VOICE BY ACCIDENT

Future bandmates Keenan and Carey struck up a friendship when they moved into the same seedy Los Angeles apartment complex in the late '80s. "We spent most of the time trying to keep the bums from defecating on our front steps," says Carey. "We'd communicate by yelling across the parking lot. He'd scream at me from his window in that amazing Maynard scream. I told him, 'Man, you should sing in a band.'"

07

MAYNARD'S ROOM WAS A ZOO

"I love working with animals," says Keenan, a former pet-store employee. Apparently, he brought his work home. "He'd created this weird menagerie in his room," says Carey. "He had all these lizards and birds, all running amok. He'd go buy crickets and turn them loose in there for all these different things to eat."

08

JONES PREFERS HIS WILDLIFE SOMEWHAT LESS LIVE

Jones is also an animal lover. "I'm really into taxidermy. I have 30 mounted four-horned sheep on my wall. I have birds, fish, a moose, a bear, a huge horned elk and goats."

09

LOLLAPALOOZA + LSD = LUV

Riding the success of their emotionally brutal full-length debut, *Underdog*, Tool landed a gig on the 1993 Lollapalooza tour, where Keenan discovered "the real alt-rock" in Primus and Fishbone. Jones found something more: his future wife, who was there with acid guru Timothy Leary, then in his final years. "She did whatever he needed, including running his website," he says. "That was Tim's final wish. He wanted to live on—on the web."

10

KEENAN CROSS-DRESSES TO SAVE HIS FAMILY

Many assume Maynard's onstage kabuki transvestite look is about getting in touch with his feminine



Maynard's *Phantom of the Opera* audition yielded a mixed reaction.

clown side. In fact, obscuring his identity with costumes occurred to him after his son was born in 1995. "I'm a very private person." He also just plain likes getting dolled up. "I wouldn't change one stitch of it. It's ridiculous, but I'm proud of it."

"I HAVE 30 MOUNTED FOUR-HORNED SHEEP ON MY WALL." **ADAM JONES**

11

A BROTHERLY ASS-KICKING GOT THEM A BASSIST

It's hard to imagine Tool without their low-end rumble, but they were rendered momentarily rumble-less in 1995 when original bassist Paul D'Amour left the band. Their choice for a replacement, Justin Chancellor of the English band Peach, initially had reservations about joining team Tool. "It was a little overwhelming," he recalls. "Joining a band you completely respect. My brother kicked me in the ass. He said, 'You'll regret it for the rest of your life if you don't go try.'"



Tom Cruise: hates shrinks, heartburn.

12

TOM CRUISE ISN'T LIKELY TO HAVE KEENAN OVER FOR DINNER

The man who penned the lyrics "Fuck L. Ron Hubbard and all his clones" recalls a 1993 gig at the Church of Scientology's Celebrity's Centre, where he spent most of the show baa-ing like a sheep at the audience. "Before our set this guy tries to intimidate me by showing me a gun in his jacket. I explained to him that if he pissed me off I'd start a riot."

13

MTV IS SCARED OF THEIR VIDEOS

Jones directs Tool's creepy claymation videos. Not that they see much airtime. Programmers shied away from clips for songs like "Stinkfist," from the band's 1996 *Aenima*, due to the song's icky subject. Jones shrugs it off: "They just don't play 'em 'cause it's not Britney."

14

THEY'LL BE SAFE IF CALIFORNIA FALLS INTO THE OCEAN

On *Aenima*'s "Aenema," Keenan prayed for L.A. to be "flushed away." If his dream comes true, Chancellor can deliver Tool to safety. "I learned how to sail," he says. "I just went to the Caribbean in November and crewed on a 43-foot catamaran."

15

KEENAN CAN ACT

Keenan isn't tight with Ohio homie Marilyn Manson, but he has played murderous cult leader Charles Manson on *The Ben Stiller Show*. He also appeared on the mid-'90s HBO sketch comedy series *Mr. Show*, and as Satan in the 2002 film *Bikini Bandits*. So what's harder, playing the prince of darkness or a hippie serial killer? "Oh, Manson. He's a real person. People know what he looks like, how he talked. With Satan there's so much gray area."

16

A POX ON THE NET

Carey collects the writings of famous English occultist Aleister Crowley. "I have a copy of *White Stains* worth about \$10,000. I used to find stuff when we were first touring, complete gems for five bucks. It's like an addiction. But the Internet kind of ruined it."

17

KEENAN'S A CORK-SNIFFER

Celebs from Madonna to Dave Matthews have slapped their names on cheap vino, but Keenan is rock's biggest oenophile by a mile. He owns a vineyard, Caduceus, in Northern Arizona and he's even discovered a grape, the Orelia. "It's in my blood. My great-grandfather made wine and it's a tradition I want to pass on to my son. It's a safeguard against funneling into Crystal Meth hell."

18

EVEN KEENAN'S SIDE PROJECTS HAVE SIDE PROJECTS

Keenan's musical moonlighting extends beyond his chart-topping spin-off *A Perfect Circle*. He's also in art-metal maniacs Puscifer, which at one point spun off to become

"*READY TO Tanqueray?*"

~ TONY SINCLAIR



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Umlaut, "L.A.'s Premier Improvisational Hardcore Band." Says Keenan: "We'd come out dressed all DC punk, and I'd shout, 'Gimme a person, place or thing.' And whatever they said—'butcher at an airport'—we'd turn into a 15-second punk song."

19

THE OTHER GUYS WEREN'T JEALOUS

"I've always had faith in the power of our music," says Carey. "Even if Maynard wouldn't admit it, he knew A Perfect Circle was a side project."

20

DJS LOVE LIL' MAYN

While Tool were on hiatus, gloom merchants like Staind and Disturbed tried to horn in on their fans. A few mod rock jocks tried to keep hope alive by playing "Maynard's Dick," a hidden track on the 2000 outtakes boxset, *Salival*. Big Maynard was not amused by his third eye's moment in the sun. "It was a stupid song," he says. "They shouldn't have played it. That's why it was a hidden track."

21

FAVORITE BAND HOBBY: PUNK THE INTERVIEWER

Tool like it when writers do research beyond the bio provided by their record label. So for *Lateralus*, Keenan decided to slip a few untruths into their press kit. "If someone would say, 'So, I hear you guys all bake pies together,' it was obvious they knew nothing," says Jones.

22

THEIR PAL WANTS JT SNUFFED

Carey also has a side gig, Pigmy Love Circus, known for its confrontational attitude. How confrontational? Singer Mike Savage publicly put out a hit on Justin Timberlake for \$73.82. "I think it was his bar tab at the time," says Carey. "Mike's a big guy; he could crush Timberlake between two fingers anyway."

23

KEENAN IS IMMUNE TO NSA WIRETAPPING ...

Maynard's never been shy about his political beliefs (see A Perfect Circle's Bush-blasting 2004 *emotive*) and he's certain Dick Cheney would love to tap his phone. But he's a gun nut, making him safe: "They can collect any information they want for their records—unless you own a weapon. Because if you're part of the NRA, those records can't be accessed."

24

... AND HATES ILLEGAL DOWNLOADING

Some have speculated that the *10,000 Days* cover art and cinematic



Getting weird in 1996's "Stinkfist" video.



Tool, 1993: perfecting the mohawk-mullet.

musical flow are incentive to purchase, rather than download, the album. And Keenan takes a decidedly Lars Ulrichian view of file-sharing. "It's stealing," he says. "You can't go into Wal-mart and take a jar of food."

25

KEENAN'S NOT ALONE IN THE TOOL MILITIA

Jones is strapped to the max. "I have a lot of old guns. I'm fascinated by World War II," he says. Don't worry, highway lane-hoppers, he's armed and courteous. "California's a liberal state, so it has all these weird laws about where you can shoot."

26

CAREY CAN'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT HIS HOG

When he's not boning up on the occult or sending drumheads to the ER, Tool's skin-slapper likes to hit the open road in his favorite vintage BMW motorcycle. "I have a big case for it so I can bring it on tour," he says. "I don't have to sit around the smelly venue all day. I can go out on my bike and explore."



Frances Bean accompanies Courtney as she accepts her Mother of the Year award.



A Tool fan attempts Christendom's most strenuous high-five.

28

THEY OFTEN GOT LUMPED IN WITH KORN BUT THEY'RE MORE LIKE THE DOORS

The cover art for *10,000 Days*—a psychedelic flipbook to be viewed through a stereoscopic lens—is influenced by "sacred geometry," the belief that combinations of shapes reflect the harmony of the universe. "There's a universal consciousness," says Jones. "Some of us are more conscious than others." Carey is also a big fan of transcendence. "An artist should be a shaman," he says.

29

CHANCELLOR DISPENSES ADVICE ON DENTAL HYGIENE

He and his fiancée recently opened a record- and bookstore called Lobal

"AN ARTIST SHOULD BE A SHAMAN."

DANNY CAREY

27

KEENAN IS LOOKING OUT FOR FRANCES BEAN

Keenan, a big Kurt Cobain fan, was troubled by Courtney Love's suspect parenting techniques, so he designed a T-shirt emblazoned with the phrase FREE FRANCES BEAN. "I heard Frances saw one and asked if she could have it. Courtney had to stop and explain to her what an asshole I was."

Orning in Topanga, California, "focusing on authors and artists other shops rarely stock." What's the most obscure find in the crates? "A record called *Captain Tooth Decay*, with Muhammad Ali on it. Some guy had about 500 of these things and he was like, 'Can you move these somehow?' I only took one."

30

TORI AMOS IS A SUCKER FOR MAYNARD'S COOKING

Amos says nobody bakes better cookies than Keenan. His tastiest? "Balls of Satan, Mexican Wedding Cakes, Snowballs," he says. He also co-owns a well-reviewed eatery, Cobras & Matadors, in Hollywood. "I recommend the Sugar Chili Prawns."

31

THEY'RE SPORTS NUTS ...

Justin grew up playing soccer and supports U.K. football club Chelsea. "With satellite TV I can watch five or six games a weekend." Danny, a hoops head, is still grieving over the Kansas Jayhawks' early departure from the last two NCAA tournaments. "Oh, I was in anguish."

32

... BUT NOT JESUS FREAKS

A few years ago, Keenan announced that he'd converted to Christianity, a surprising move for a guy who sang "Fuck your God/Your Lord your Christ" on A Perfect Circle's "Judith," a song named after his mother. Shocked fans might have saved themselves some heartburn if they'd bothered to check the calendar. "It was April Fools'," says Keenan. "If you fall for that on April Fools' Day, there's nothing I can do for you."

33

HE'S REALLY NAMED MAYNARD

Gotcha! Keenan was born James Herbert Keenan. We don't know why he changed his name, and he won't tell us. But now you know. And knowing is 1/33rd of the battle. [BLENDER]

“*SWAGGER, NOT STAGGER.*”

~ TONY SINCLAIR



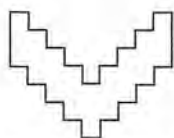
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PHARRELL WILLIAMS



TELL US ABOUT YOUR NEW CD. WHY DID YOU CALL IT *IN MY MIND*?

I felt I could make a hip-hop record and an R&B record on the same album. And nobody can tell me I can't—because it's *in my mind*.

WAS IT FUN TO MAKE YOUR FIRST SOLO RECORD?

It was a nightmare. There were too many cooks in the kitchen.

WE WOULD THINK YOU'D BE THE ONLY COOK THAT MATTERED.

I am, but I had a lot of motherfuckers looking over my shoulder, saying "When's it coming out? When's it coming out?" Blah, blah, blah.

OKAY, BUT GIVEN THAT SOME SONGS AND VIDEOS CAME OUT LAST YEAR, WHY DID IT TAKE SO LONG?

The problem, really, was that I was being all anxious and I pulled back the curtain too fast. I gave one song out to DJs and I didn't even have my album mixed yet. It was very immature on my part.

IS IT TRUE THAT ONE SONG ON THE RECORD WAS INSPIRED BY VINCE VAUGHN IN *WEDDING CRASHERS*?

Yeah, "Baby." When Vince says, "That brunette over there is definitely eye-fucking me," I saw that and went, "Aww, shit!" So I wrote that song—it's all about eye-fuckin', when you can't get to a girl and she can't get to you, but you definitely have something going on.

WHAT MAKES YOU THE SELF-PROCLAIMED "BLACK CARL SAGAN"?

I think Carl Sagan was the shit. He was more than just a scientist, he was a scientist *of life*, and I thought he was a genius. He was definitely the king and I completely look up to him. I read *Cosmos*, and *Contact* is one of my favorite movies.

SO WHEN THEY MAKE COMMERCIAL SPACE TRAVEL AVAILABLE TO ORDINARY CITIZENS, WILL YOU BE STANDING IN LINE?

Absolutely not. You don't know what's going to happen once you get out there. What if they start locking all the black people out? You can't figure what the situation is going to be out there. The laws of physics are different—in a lot of ways, not in all ways. Prime numbers are still prime numbers, no matter where you go. But out there gravity is different, and I'm pretty sure if the gravity is different a ton of other things are different, too. Shit, there are places on earth where things are accepted that are frowned on in other places—so imagine what it's like out there! And who's governing it, between different jurisdictions, you know what I'm saying? I'm definitely staying my ass on the ground.

PRUDENT THINKING. YOU HAVE AMAZINGLY BROAD TASTE IN MUSIC, BUT WE CAN'T RECALL YOU EVER SAYING ANYTHING ABOUT COUNTRY. DO YOU LIKE IT?

Yeah, I grew up on that in Virginia. 9 to 5 was a great movie. Dolly Parton was a huge influence. And *Dukes of Hazzard*: Who didn't watch *Dukes of Hazzard*? Shit man, *Smokey and the Bandit*, *BJ and the Bear*: That shit was huge. Heavy. I love Bonnie Raitt. Anne Murray—she's not really, really country, but she's gotta be in there, too. Love her. It's what I grew up with.

YOU'VE PRODUCED ODB AND SOME MUSIC ON THE NEXT CD BY SCOTT WEILAND'S VELVET REVOLVER. WHO NEEDED MORE TLC IN THE STUDIO?

Scott is just an interesting and incredible individual. He's got that deep back story, and he knows so much about music. ODB, he definitely was saying out-there things, but at the same he was part of this religious sect called the Five Percent Nation. It's all based on facts and mathematics, and ODB could tell you anything—he could tell you how many miles were between the sun and each planet. Both were interesting people.

NEPTUNES ÜBER-PRODUCER AND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN ON HIS NEW SOLO ALBUM, DOLLY PARTON AND HOW HE'S THE "BLACK CARL SAGAN"

BY RJ SMITH

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHERYL NIELDS

I HEARD THAT Q-TIP SENDS YOU WHOLE IPODS FULL OF MUSIC HE WANTS YOU TO HEAR.

Yep. He's done it, like, three times.

WHAT'S THE LAST THING HE SENT YOU THAT KNOCKED YOU OUT?

Ooh, I know what the shit is. From Donald Blackman, a song called "Holding You, Loving You." Oh my god, from an album called *Blackman*. It's sooo amazing. It's a colorful soul song with jazz inflections. You definitely want to check it out, but it's hard to find, even on the Internet. You gotta go into some file shares, can't go into no iTunes.

YOU'RE A RENOWNED 24-HOUR PARTY PERSON. WHO HAS THE MORE BLINGIN' JET, DIDDY OR JAY-Z?

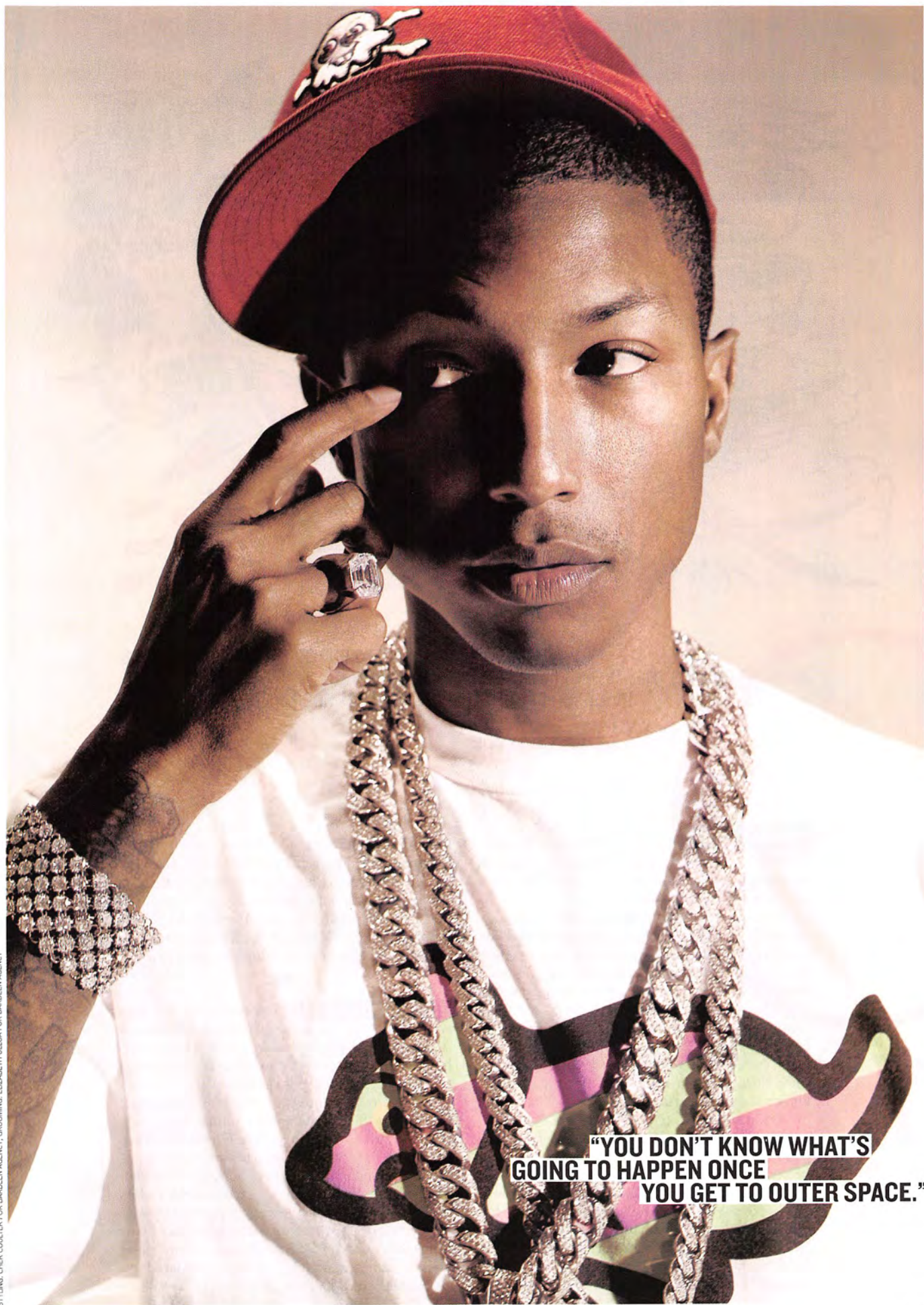
I dunno ... don't really make sense to have a jet. [*Thinks quietly*] But you know, sometimes you don't want just any jet, sometimes you want a G-Force, or a Challenger 600 or 800 or a Hawk or a Falcon. It just depends on the scenario or where you are going. Jay-Z does Boeing, he goes all the way. I never chartered up a Boeing.

WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT A BOEING?

A Boeing is a huge, huge fucking airplane, like a 747. I flew with him one time, from a show. It was like three bedrooms.

EVER REGRET STARTING THE TRUCKER HAT CRAZE? BECAUSE THOUGH ASHTON KUTCHER GETS THE GLORY, WE ALL KNOW THAT YOU WERE WAY AHEAD OF THE CURVE.

No regrets. Credit is to be given and not to be taken. I'm cool. [*blends*]



STYLING: CHER COULTER FOR BARDEEN AGENCY; GROOMING: ELIZABETH ULLOA FOR BARDEEN AGENCY

**"YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S
GOING TO HAPPEN ONCE
YOU GET TO OUTER SPACE."**



TWO DAYS. 130 BANDS. 30,000 SQUEALING 14-YEAR-OLDS. BLENDER POUNDS THE PAVEMENT AT THE BAMBOOZLE FESTIVAL IN SEARCH OF THE BLEEDING HEART OF ROCK & ROLL

BY JOSH EELLS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK WEISS

"OH MY GOD," says singer Brendon Urie as he surveys the crowd at the Giants Stadium parking lot, sounding both elated and utterly terrified. "I've never seen so many fucking people in my life."

Two years ago, Panic! At the Disco were just another bunch of 17-year-old goof-offs, bashing out Blink-182 covers at their drummer's grandma's house in suburban Las Vegas. But then they posted a few demos on PureVolume, a MySpace-like website for up-and-coming bands. Next thing they knew, Fall Out Boy's Pete Wentz, who moonlights as an A&R rep for indie label Fueled By Ramen, was driving out to Vegas to sign them, even though they'd never so much as played a show. Now, barely 18 months later, the band are genuine pop stars, premiering their videos on *TRL*, selling more than 700,000 copies of their debut CD and playing here, in a sprawling sea of asphalt just off the New Jersey Turnpike, to a crowd bigger than a sold-out Madison Square Garden.

It's called the Bamboozle: a two-day celebration of that hopelessly heartbroken, outrageously melodramatic, occasionally ridiculous offshoot of punk rock known as emo. With six stages and over 130 acts, Bamboozle is the single biggest collection of emo bands ever assembled in the history of the planet—everyone

from AFI to Zox. For the next 36 hours, nearly 30,000 hormone-addled teens from all over the Eastern Seaboard will descend on the Meadowlands like pilgrims to a Gen-Y Mecca—many of them for their first concert ever. If you're looking for a place from which to divine the murky future of rock, you could do a lot worse than this parking lot somewhere in the swamps of Jersey.



THE BAMBOOZLE TRACES its roots to 2001 as the Skate and Surf Festival—a one-day, three-stage blowout at a crumbling convention hall in nearby Asbury Park. New Found Glory were the headliners, tickets cost 13 bucks and about 3,000 kids showed up.

Five years later, emo is a cultural and commercial juggernaut—the soundtrack for young, white, suburban America. And with just one or two exceptions, Bamboozle has snagged its biggest stars. Crowd-pleasing Long Island vets Taking Back Sunday, who recently entered the charts at No. 2, headline Sunday's bill. Also on Sunday are Bay Area goth-punks AFI, who debuted at No. 1 a few weeks later. Oklahoma's hookhappy All-American Rejects, playing Saturday evening, are certified platinum. And scene standard-bearers Fall Out Boy, who head up Saturday's show, have



Top, "Save some for the Porta-Potties!": night falls at Bamboozle. Bottom, Pete Wentz of headliners Fall Out Boy: "Commence weeping!"



ARE YOU EMO?

FIND OUT IF YOU WEAR YOUR HEART ON YOUR SLEEVE ... OR JUST A ROLLED-UP PACK OF SMOKES

1 HOW DID YOU MEET YOUR NEW GIRLFRIEND?

- A She's a cheerleader for your crosstown rival football team.
- B She's a co-worker at Kinko's.
- C Well, you haven't actually met her, like, in person, but her profile picture's way hot.

2 HAVE YOU FINISHED YOUR HOMEWORK?

- A "In study hall, just before the Young Republicans meeting."
- B "Almost—might blow off algebra, though."
- C "Shut up, Mom! I hate you!"

3 THE WORLD IS A COLD, HARSH PLACE AND EVERYONE YOU'VE EVER LOVED WILL ONE DAY DIE. THOUGHTS?

- A "Dude, lighten up. Put down the bong and have a beer."
- B "Maybe so, but you just have to slog your way through and do the best you can."
- C "Ooh, I just downloaded their first EP!"

4 YOUR GIRLFRIEND JUST DUMPED YOU FOR ANOTHER DUDE. WHAT DO YOU DO?

- A What can you do? There are other fish in the sea.
- B Get drunk, avoid her at parties, maybe hook up with one of her friends out of spite.
- C Check to see if the URL sarahisaslut.com is available, cover up her name on your forearm with the Weezer logo, sell two million records.

5 WHAT MAKES YOU CRY?

- A Winning the U.S. Open in your first year as a pro.
- B The end of *Old Yeller*.
- C What doesn't?

IF YOU ANSWERED ...

MOSTLY A's: You are not emo, but you do sometimes beat up kids who are.

MOSTLY B's: You are not emo, you're just a little sensitive.

MOSTLY C's: OMG, you are too so emo. :->

STEVE KANDELL



"Hey, dude, you stepped on my feelings!"



Panic! At the Disco, calm at the backstage area.



All-American Rejects: tragic victims of "guitar face."

topped a whopping 2.3 million in sales—practically Coldplay numbers.

But what's most interesting about Bamboozle aren't the headliners, but everyone else—the 125 non-superstars. While scoping out the merch tables on a picture-perfect Saturday afternoon, *Blender* stumbles on a band called Inventions, an unsigned New Jersey six-piece who don't look a day past senior year. They're playing to a crowd of about 1,000, which itself is an impressive feat for a group whose recorded output consists of three MySpace demos. But then, between songs, the singer takes a minute to thank the crowd "for coming out to see our third show ever."

The prospect seems incredible; as Thursday singer Geoff Rickly says, "It was years before we played to that many people." But Bamboozle is teeming with bands that are bigger than their third-tier timeslots. Now that MySpace and PureVolume have made even the most unknown artists just a mouse-click away, it's as easy for a high-school ska-punk band like Awful Waffle to build word-of-mouth as it is for a major-label act like All-American Rejects. "It used to be you needed that big break," says Anthony Raneri of Long Island's Bayside, one of the first bands to recognize the web's vast potential. "Now you can be an unsigned band who's never played a show, but if you write good songs and put in the time, you're gonna have fans."

Essentially, the musical playing field has been leveled—the emo world, as author Thomas Friedman might say, is flat. Over the weekend we ask about 30 kids who they're most excited to see, and we get about 30 different answers. It's like an all-you-can-eat buffet: People don't come to Bamboozle to see the

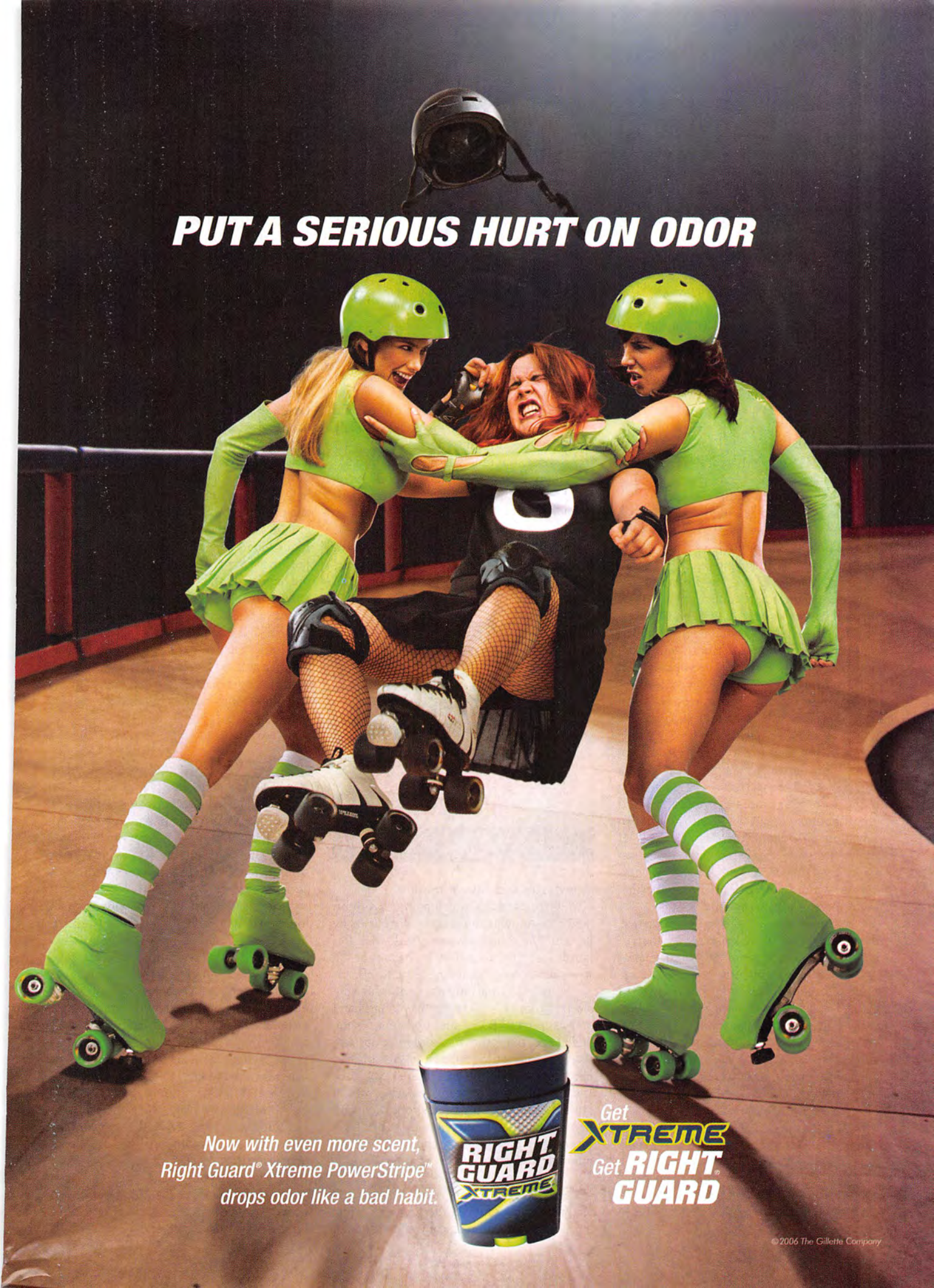
headliners; they come to see *everybody*.

Like Underoath, a hardcore Christian crew from Florida with soaring choruses and wide-angle lyrics about salvation and (chaste) love. They've already secured a prime spot on this summer's Warped Tour; today they offer an exhilarating preview to a few thousand of their fiercely devoted disciples. Or the Hush Sound, a delightfully poppy Illinois quartet whose Bob Morris sings in a breezy rasp reminiscent of Davey von Bohlen of influential emo act the Promise Ring.

Or Chiodos. A furious emo-metal outfit from Davison, Michigan, they pack in about 3,000 fans for their Saturday set, then draw even more on Sunday, despite the fact that they're playing the sixth stage under the pseudonym Fluff My Boner. Frontman Craig Owens—an earnest 21-year-old who once roared so hard onstage he suffered a collapsed lung—wades across the crowd's outstretched hands like a screamo messiah, and every single person sings along. It's as exciting as anything that happens on the main stage all weekend—and if it weren't for Dave, a 17-year-old kid from Delaware, *Blender* never would have heard of them.

"We were totally surprised by the reaction we got," Owens says later. "We're from this tiny, middle-of-nowhere town, like blink and you miss it, and to be playing at Bamboozle, to thousands of kids..."

He pauses. "It's kind of amazing." →



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FOR MUCH OF its 20-year-history—from its roots in the basements of the D.C. hardcore scene right up through its Dashboard Confessional-triggered entrance into the pop consciousness—emo was literally a punch line: shorthand for sensitive, self-pitying white boys singing plaintive songs about girls who wouldn't sleep with them. "It was always a word we'd use to make fun of our friends," says Taking Back Sunday singer Adam Lazzara. "Like, 'Come on, quit being so fucking emo.' It just sounds so... uncool."

But in retrospect, that very uncoolness has helped forge emo's popularity. The private traumas made public, the endless self-consciousness, the crushes and backstabbing and awkward sex and tears—it's the ultimate soundtrack for adolescence, when every social misstep is a DEFCON-1-level catastrophe and every breakup a bottomless chasm of heart-break and suffering.

"I was devastated when my first girlfriend dumped me," says Chiodos's Owens. "At that age, that's the whole world, you know?"

Emo is rock for the Era of Sharing—a world of blogs, tell-all memoirs, *Real World* confessional booths and *Oprah*. "It's amazing how unaffected these kids are," says Sarah Lewitinn, co-founder of Island Records' emo-centric imprint Stolen Transmission. "They wear everything right on their sleeves."

Of course, all these vulnerable boys baring their souls are bound to attract some attention from the ladies. But this weekend's crowd is astonishingly, overwhelmingly female—at least two-thirds, maybe even more. One source of the appeal is obvious: As 16-year-old Ashley points out with an implicit *duh*, "Guys in bands are *hot*." Nor does it hurt that the songs are typically short and fast, with polished guitars and hooks galore—perfect for singing along in the car or after drama club rehearsal. And emo's glamorous, sad-eyed androgyny is also way more girl-friendly than, say, Ozzfest. "At nü-metal shows, it was always like, 'Fuck, am I gonna get raped?'" Lewitinn says. "At Bamboozle it's more like, 'Fuck, am I gonna get that boy's mascara all over my shirt?'"

Yet for all the females in the audience, there are almost none onstage. Of the 130 bands here, *Blender* counts a grand total of two with girls. Luckily one of them is Paramore, a rambunctious Tennessee quintet led by the irresistibly cute Hayley Williams is all of 17, and she still brings her dad on tour, but today, belting out her breakup ballads and stalking the stage in a fire-red T-shirt and hair to match, she looks every bit the star in the making.

"It's a very scary situation," she says of being a girl in an emo band. "You're out here with all these guys; you've got so many people judging you, which girls can be very sensitive to. It's a heavy role to take on. But I'm not really about girl power and all that stuff," she adds—charmingly unaware that, of course, she so totally is.



Chiodos's Craig Owens gets a hand from the crowd.



Paramore's Hayley Williams raises the roof on Saturday.

THE BEST PART of Fall Out Boy's headlining set doesn't come from Fall Out Boy at all, but from their pals Panic! At the Disco, who come onstage to duet on their own hit. It's an oddly hip-hop move, bringing your posse up to get some shine. But emo has managed to build its empire partly by being the first rock movement to take marketing cues from commercial rap. Bands take their friends on tour; they recruit online street teams; they make cameos on each other's records. Pete Wentz—whom Lewitinn calls "the Jay-Z of emo"—even has his own Roc-A-Fella-like gang of protégés



OVER THE WEEKEND WE ASK 30 KIDS WHO THEY'RE MOST EXCITED TO SEE, AND WE GET 30 DIFFERENT ANSWERS.

signed to his Decaydance imprint.

"We're fascinated with hip-hop," says John Janick, co-founder and president of Fueled By Ramen. "We're basically trying to do what Def Jam did back in the day—selling records on the street, grassroots promotion, all that stuff."

Essentially what emo has done is take the old DIY model—of a scene like Long Island or Washington, D.C.—and update it for the digital age. Instead of mail-ordering obscure seven-inches, you log on to LimeWire. Instead of a beery hole-in-the-wall, there's MySpace and YouTube. And instead of a boring suburb or shitty backwoods town (Davison, Michigan, say), there's a new kind of national subculture, where everyone's your friend and word-of-mouth travels at 1,000 kbps.

There's plenty to dislike about the scene, of course: It's lily-white, both onstage and off; its lyrics are often borderline misogynistic; it's almost pathologically self-absorbed.

Perhaps most damning of all, many of these bands sound completely alike: Emo's sonic template has barely changed in half a decade. "There does seem to be a lot of screaming," notes Geoff Rickly dryly. "And a lot of lyrics about girls."

Moreover, despite grumblings that the genre has reached its tipping point—where, as Adam Lazzara says, "the kids coming to shows are the same kids who used to kick my ass in high school"—emo has yet to produce its Pearl Jam or Nirvana, the one-in-a-million breakout band that can propel it from subculture to superpower. That could soon change: Dashboard Confessional just released a new CD, and Fall Out Boy and My Chemical Romance will follow later in the fall. But even if those albums stiff, says Thursday's Geoff Rickly with a shrug, it doesn't much matter: "There's five more bands right behind them, ready to take their place."



WHEN TAKING BACK Sunday take the main stage Sunday night, they may as well be Bon Jovi. Backed by a huge marquee and towering light display, Adam Lazzara starts off by shouting, "Hello, New Jersey!" before thrilling the crowd with a swaggering set, including one song he sings hanging upside-down from a 30-foot scaffold.

But Lazzara's antics are still no match for the Riverboat Gamblers, a ferocious foursome from Denton, Texas, who play stage six a few hours earlier. Two songs into their set, singer Mike Wiebe—a long-haired Adrien Brody lookalike with a penchant for diving headfirst into crowds barely big enough to catch him—tumbles off the stage and lands awkwardly on his fingers. "I think I broke one or two of them," he says, wincing, into the mic, but he heads for the 15-foot chain-link fence next to the stage and starts climbing anyway.

"It's OK!" he explains. "We're at Bamboozle! Tonight isn't about how many of your fingers work, or how many gigs your iPod holds, or how much gas costs."

Wiebe takes a breath and gazes out at a few hundred of his newest fans. "Tonight," he says with the wide-eyed sincerity of a true believer, "is about the music." [BLUNDER]



Aliens turned Tommy's world upside down...

Now he's about to return the favor.

PREY

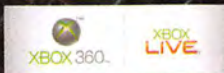
"Prey looks like one of the best first-person shooters of the year in both graphics and gameplay." - IGN

"Absolutely incredible to look at, packed with scintillating effects." - Play

"Doom 3" hiked the bar. Prey may transform the bar altogether." - UUP



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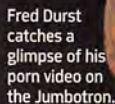
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FIASCOS!**

**“STOP!
THIS IS A
NIGHTMARE!”**



FROM **FIONA APPLE**'S NERVOUS BREAKDOWN TO **U2**'S
MALFUNCTIONING GIANT LEMON, NO MUSICIAN IS
IMMUNE TO THE CATASTROPHE OF THE ONSTAGE
MELTDOWN. **BLENDER** PRESENTS A RUN-DOWN OF
ABSURD SETS, DRUNKEN LEAD SINGERS AND HORRIBLY
EXPOSED MIMING ... SORRY, NO REFUNDS!

BY BEN MITCHELL



Not pictured: band members, dwarves, fans, good taste.

[MELTDOWNS]

SHAME SCALE:

CHARLIE RICH

SHAME SCALE:

R. KELLY

SHAME SCALE:

BLACK SABBATH

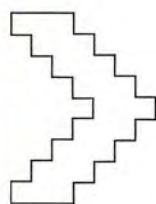
ROSS HALFIN (photographer): I went to their rehearsal to do a shot for the tour book. They had this plywood Stonehenge that reached to



GILLAN: When I was in Vermont working with Deep Purple, we used to go to the pub and this bloke came up on weekends from New York. It turned out he had a friend who was working on a movie called *Spinal Tap*, and I told them all these stories. It has to be what inspired it. [BLENDER]



Who is Julia Diaco and why are people saying such terrible things about her?



FOR SIX HOT MONTHS IN 2004, JULIA DIACO WAS A TABLOID SENSATION, A PRETTY, RICH GIRL STRAIGHT OUTTA *THE SOPRANOS* BUSTED FOR DEALING DRUGS FROM HER NYU DORM ROOM. NOW SHE'S BACK IN THE LIMELIGHT, THIS TIME AS A BUDDING POP STAR RENAMED J-DIA. "I'M NOT YOUR TYPICAL AMERICA'S SWEETHEART," SHE TELLS *BLENDER*

BY CHRIS NORRIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF RIEDEL



On tonight's episode
of *Lifestyles of the Rich
and Pantsless* ...

JACKET BY MARC BOWEN. SWIMSUIT BY ASHLEY TYLER. BOOTS BY NARCISO RODRIGUEZ.

BLENDER 97

JULIA DIACO felt the first blush of fame in April 2004. She was walking down 8th Street in Manhattan. "I was right across from where I used to get my nails done," she recalls. "And a guy walks up to me and asks me where I'm going." A few others joined him, one grabbed her bag and she was rushed into a blue van. Ten minutes later, Diaco was in a holding cell.

"I felt like a monkey in the circus," she continues. "It was a little cage—maybe four by four feet—and all these cops kept coming by and pointing at me and saying, 'That's her, that's her.'" Four hours later she was allowed a phone call to her father. The police informed him that, after a months-long investigation, they had searched his daughter's New York University dorm room and discovered marijuana and cocaine.

Soon after this it became apparent that quite a few people had been following the girl voted "most likely to be famous" by Rumson-Fair Haven High School's Class of 2003. At 7 p.m. it was time to transfer her to jail. "As they were taking me out of the holding cell, one cop said to me, 'You might want to put your jacket on, you might want to put your hood up,'" Diaco says. "I didn't know what the fuck he was talking about. I thought, 'OK, I guess it's gonna be cold out.'"

Then they got to the door. "Right before he opens it, the cop turns to me and he says, 'Get ready for the reporters.'"

BY APRIL 28, 2004, 24 hours after her arrest, Julia Diaco was a New York tabloid sensation: pretty NYU freshman, wealthy Italian-American family, New Jersey background, drug sting. A little Tonya Harding, a little Amy Fisher, with some Meadow Soprano thrown in. The *New York Post* led the media coverage, marking each new chapter of the story with headlines like **NEW RAP FOR NYU POT PRINCESS** and **SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL—NYU 'DRUG' BRAT LIKE A LITTLE GIRL LOST**.

As Diaco was arraigned, released on bail and plea-bargained into 18 months of behavioral treatment and vocational training, the local papers milked every moment for maximum rabble-rousing indignation. "The newly dethroned Pot Princess of NYU wiped off her sneer and rose to her full five-foot height," went one article. "Julia Diaco approached the judge with anger raging in her ice-blue eyes ... The defiant little outlaw has been taken down."



Clockwise from top left: the Diaco family home in Rumson, N.J.; Julia gets hauled to the pokey, April 2004; the Pot Princess's dorm; Mom and Dad protecting their daughter from the cameras.

The tale of a *nouveau riche* beauty gone to seed was irresistible to the scandal sheets: "She was young, rich and she sold drugs," explains *Post* columnist Andrea Peyser. "What more do you need?"

In the minutely calibrated world of celebrity status, Diaco was probably somewhere on the E-list—just below celebrity chef. Still, her story spread far and wide. "I had friends in Jersey who I didn't even know could read," says Diaco's friend Melissa Timarchi. "And they were like, 'Oh, did you know that girl, the Pot Princess?'" Another friend, Lara Sawczuk, relays an even more distant reach. "I knew someone from *Illinois* and they were like, 'Oh, did you know that girl?'"

Coverage cooled a bit as Diaco withdrew from NYU and began her court-mandated stint in a behavioral center—first in a Montana group home she describes as "cult-like," then in a more isolated place in Idaho, and eventually in a facility in Santa Monica, California.

But while her tabloid star might have

dimmed, in the Internet world of do-it-yourself fame Diaco was just getting started. In California, where she was finally allowed a laptop, she began downloading mixtapes and, soon, recording original songs. With nothing but a Dell, a headset mic and Google, she started drafting her career as a singer-songwriter.

For 19-year-olds who have grown up in the age of Paris Hilton, *American Idol* and *Us Weekly*, stardom might not look like such a lofty, untouchable meritocracy. In May 2005, Diaco opened a MySpace page featuring early versions of her songs and sultry photos of her bikini-clad self. And by April of this year, she had reentered the spotlight as the hip-hop-styled singer J-Dia.

The tabloids were ready: **BONGS TO SONGS—POT PRINCESS PUSHING FOR POP FAME AS SINGER J-DIA**. But Diaco seemed unfazed—she flaunted her rep by signing with a small Jersey-based record label called Forget About It Music (after the wiseguy expression from mob film *Donnie Brasco*) and titling her upcoming debut album *My Blue Heaven* (after a film about a mobster in witness protection). As the *Post* put it, Diaco's "Web bio crowed that she was 'one of the decade's most infamous drug dealers,' but also whined that she was the victim of a 'flawed' NYPD investigation."

Diaco doesn't dispute selling weed—along with some coke, mushrooms and LSD specifically requested by a stranger who turned out to be a narc. ("I'd never even seen [mushrooms] before he asked me to get him some," she says.) But she also knows that low-level

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS AFTER HER ARREST, DIACO WAS A TABLOID SENSATION: A LITTLE AMY FISHER, WITH SOME MEADOW SOPRANO THROWN IN.



dealing isn't enough to land you on the front page of the *Post*. She still smarts over some of the coverage, especially by the *Post*'s Peyser, whose treatment of various subjects might be most charitably called "hardball" (as in calling Michael Jackson's seemingly sweet-natured babymama an "obese, foulmouthed brood mare"). The paper even misprinted Diaco's handle as the awesomely metal "J-Dio."

But otherwise, Diaco seems inured to the standard rap on her thus far. "It's always that I was a spoiled brat who didn't give a fuck, who had torn everyone's life apart, including her own," she says. "I was so privileged and I blew it all. That's the story."

Needless to say, J-Dia has a story of her own.



DIACO ENTERS THE dim chatter of a Manhattan restaurant on a rainy May night, silently and sans posse—tiny, sweet-faced and obscurely intimidating. Tanned honey-brown from a recent trip to Florida, she's sporting a mocha zip-up hoodie, tight jeans, leopard-print shoes and a Dolce & Gabbana bag. Five-foot-one and a youngish 20, she looks like the badass missing Olsen triplet.

Part of her edge comes from the eyes: coolly appraising and strikingly slate-gray, despite her family's origins in Southern Italy. "We're all from this one small town in Calabria where everyone's got blue eyes," she says. "Everyone else there is dark." She also has a tough Jersey accent, a businesslike manner and—judging from her media vilification—a rather immense pair of *cojones*. But as Diaco sees it, she doesn't really have much to lose.

"The thing is," she says, "people can't talk any worse about me. They have exhausted every bad thing that you can possibly say about a human being. People have called me crazy, a drug dealer. I've heard I have a gambling addiction—I've been called the devil!" In other words, she has the perfect résumé for a streetwise, hip-hop-styled pop diva.

Diaco says this bid for a singing career isn't quite the reality-TV gag it might sound. "I've been singing my entire life," she says over *pasta a fagiolo*. "School plays, musicals, weddings, national anthems. I always planned to be in music." (In fact, her older brother Nick also launched a music career, releasing a CD

called *Reflections* in 1999 that consisted of songs he wrote at 13 and 14 and that was, per the *Asbury Park Press*, "among the top local sellers at Jack's Music Shop.") Julia started vocal training at age 7—"everything from Broadway to opera to pop," she says—although hip-hop soon became a competing passion. Her new music leans to strutting, don't-fuck-with-me lyrics and hip-hop club jams, which Diaco compares loosely to "Gwen Stefani, a little bit Amerie, a little bit Pink."

She grew up in the wealthy suburb of Rumson, New Jersey, in a castle-like multimillion-dollar mansion owned by her construction-magnate father Anthony. Her mother is active in charity work, hobnobbing with Rumson celebrities like Jon Bon Jovi (Bruce Springsteen is also a neighbor). While Diaco smoked quite a bit of weed in high school, the former gymnast, theater performer and top student was hardly a teen at risk.

"She was always participating in school activities, on the right path," recalls her high school boyfriend Kyle DeVesty. While her brothers attended Harvard and Princeton, Diaco headed to NYU, partially to pursue her musical ambitions.

Diaco's college life seems to have been pretty standard and low-impact—going to clubs, hanging in the dorms, watching movies, writing papers and smoking pot. "I'd say I sold less weed than most college kids I know," says Melissa Timarchi, 21, one of Diaco's dormmates at Hayden Hall and a close friend from freshman year.

Julia's friends blame an unstable male acquaintance with a fixation on Diaco for setting the narc on her (following his own arrest for drug sales). After being approached one afternoon in Washington Square Park, Diaco agreed to sell the undercover cop some weed, and later agreed to get him more exotic drugs: mushrooms, LSD and cocaine. "I wasn't, like, a dealer," Diaco says. "I wasn't running this business where I'm out on the street corner, like, 'Yo, who needs weed?' People just knew I had some and they'd be like, 'Can I buy some from you?'"

She sees her arrest as a consequence of simple media manipulation. "I knew tons of people that sold way more weed than me," she says. "I just look better on the front page."



NYU'S ADMISSIONS BOARD probably should have known what they were getting into when they accepted a girl whose yearbook and application essay both quoted Tupac Shakur. Though an A-student from a prominent family, Diaco wasn't exactly sorority material when she arrived for freshman year. In fact, she was oddly battle-hardened.

Inside a tin of personal memorabilia Diaco lent *Blender*, a sheet of vellum paper is filled with pullquotes from 1988 editions of the *Asbury Park Press*. They read almost like critical raves on the back of a paperback. "Rumson →

SO, YOU WANT TO BE A POT PRINCESS TOO?



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Outdoor cannabis plots are generally harvested in remote, wooded areas. More exotic strains hail from the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia, while the cheaper stuff comes from Mexico or Central America.



2 After the harvest, plants are dried, cured and separated into leaves, stems and buds. The plant's resin can be extracted and compressed to make hash.



3 The grower sells his smokable crop to a distributor.



4 The distributor sells to local dealers, usually in increments of one to four ounces. The more steps there are along the dealer chain and the smaller the individual batches, the more the price is likely to rise. So buy in bulk. STEVE KANDELL

Fire Cause a Mystery." "Rumson police said the girl suffered burns on her legs, arms, and face, covering as much as 30% of her body." "If it were 30 seconds more ..." "Fire fails to singe family's spirit."

The fire that destroyed her family's home when she was 3 is clearly among the formative experiences in Diaco's life—leaving her with burns serious enough to require years of surgery, and scars on her arm and legs visible enough to cause significant issues in a catty beachgoing community on the Jersey Shore.

"People are pretty harsh on each other where we come from," says ex-boyfriend Kyle DeVesty. "It's a wealthy neighborhood, so everyone's got their little egos, everyone wants to be better than everybody else and everyone just rips each other apart. I think it was just a tough thing for a kid to get over."

Her scars clearly don't prohibit the brand-undies shots of a hopeful R&B hottie—"I don't have them in the places that matter," Diaco says—but they seem to have formed a core element in her personality. "I learned way too early about the power of image," she says. "Which has good and bad sides. Before I signed with Forget About It, I talked with people at Universal and Sony, but they all wanted to turn me into Britney Spears. But that's not in me, even before the arrest. I'm not your typical America's sweetheart." She laughs.

But hey, when life gives you lemons ...

She nods. "You make lemonade."



A FEW DAYS later, lemonade-making is underway in a live-work studio in Philadelphia, home base to producer Simon Illa. The condo's beige-carpeted room features a compact recording setup: computer, monitor, speakers, mics, two stacks of samplers. Diaco sits on a nearby sofa, a leg tucked up and tan skin showing through a kneehole in her tight jeans. She's wearing a midriff-baring tanktop and a luxurious ponytail bound by a white scrunchie. ("Yes, I rock the scrunchie," says Diaco. "I rock the scrunchie with pride.")

As a twinkly, booming hip-hop beat plays, Diaco looks down at a lyrics-scrawled piece of paper and tries an idea for a club track she plans to submit to a former contestant on MTV's *Making the Band*. "Move it slow, 'fore you dip it down low," she sings. The beat stops. "I'm thinking on the fourth line, where it goes 'de-nuh-nuh-nuh-nuh-nuh-NA-nu-nah'—I'm thinking it might be better to just do it straight up. So it echoes. Almost like a Latin thing."

"Yeah, that's good," says Simon.

Simon Illa, 30, is arguably Philadelphia's hottest producer—having just signed with Timbaland—and inarguably its smallest. "I'm three-foot-one," Illa says, his voice compressed like a regular dude who just huffed helium. "But that one inch is very important." He slides gracefully around the console in his motorized wheelchair, operating the joystick control with one gnarled hand.

HIGH FINANCE

FIVE NARCOTIC-ENTREPRENEURS-TURNED-ROCK-STARS WHOSE EARLY "HITS" SET THE STANDARD FOR J-DIA

PRODUCT: **MESCALINE**

DEALER: **NIKKI SIXX, MÖTLEY CRÜE**

After being tossed from high school in Seattle for selling weed, Sixx's mom kicked him out of the house and he began dealing chocolate-covered mescaline tabs to get by. In 1975 cops busted him for selling to a narc outside a Rolling Stones show. He got off with a warning.

PRODUCT: **ECSTASY**

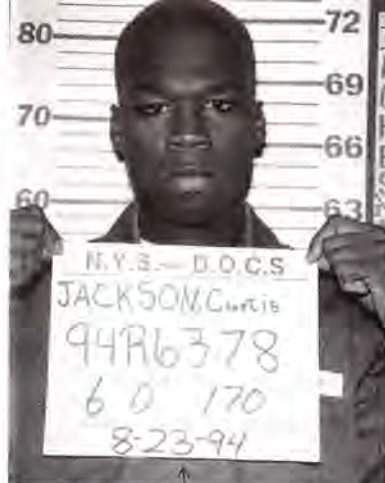
DEALER: **SHAUN RYDER, HAPPY MONDAYS**

Before Ryder became the frontman of the Happy Mondays, he did a bustling business selling ecstasy in some of Manchester's finest pubs. Ryder boasted of "selling E like T-shirts" from the stage during their shows in the early '80s, but would soon devote himself more to the consumption end of the drug market.

PRODUCT: **CRACK**

DEALER: **JAY-Z**

Shawn Carter earned his first big bills as a crack dealer in Brooklyn, then, in 1996, used the dough to help bankroll his debut album and his own record label, Roc-A-Fella. He mined his crack-pushing experiences for intricately detailed rhymes on hits like "Izzo (H.O.V.A.)." Roc-A-Fella was bought by Def Jam in late 2004, and weeks later Jigga was named president of the company. How's that for upward mobility?



PRODUCT: **HEROIN**

DEALER: **50 CENT**

Long before he wrote rap's definitive ode to smack's seductive allure (with 2005's "A Baltimore Love Thing"), Curtis Jackson got his hands dirty test-marketing the product. He and his accomplice were busted on a corner in Queens, New York, on June 29, 1994, with 12 packets of heroin (and 36 vials of crack). Three weeks later, cops discovered an envelope filled with heroin under his bed and crack rocks in his boots.

PRODUCT: **POT**

DEALER: **DAVE MUSTAINE, MEGADETH**

When guitar-shredder extraordinaire Mustaine joined Metallica in 1981, it took time away from his other job—selling pot. As the band gained steam, Mustaine gave up the dealer's life, but not the drugs, becoming something of a walking chemistry experiment, addled with coke, heroin and methamphetamines before finally getting clean in 2002. DAVID PEISNER

Born with osteogenesis imperfecta—a.k.a. brittle-bone disease—Simon Illa shares a Wikipedia entry with the French jazz pianist Michel Petrucciani and the world's shortest woman, Madge Bester, adults roughly toddler-size and confined to wheelchairs. An easy-going cut-up, Simon (born Eric Bradley Gilbert) took his tag from the 1998 film *Simon Birch*, about a small-town boy with dwarfism who sees the beauty in everything. "A friend of mine told me, 'Hey, that's like you, except you're ill,'" he says. "And I realized that was a hot name."

He was introduced to Diaco after his business partner met her at random in a south Jersey hotel. "He called me and said, 'I have this really beautiful girl sitting here and she can sing. She's looking for production and you're

the perfect guy.' We met the next day. And it was love at first sight."

Simon felt an immediate kinship with Diaco. "I think we've both been through a lot at a young age," he says. "Her with the fire, me, obviously, in my ... situation. There's a whole outer shell people see first, and you want more than anything for people to look at you for the right reasons. I go out all the time and I get all kinds of 'mini me' shit. But we both realize that petty bullshit like that is just ... stupid."

Outside the Philly studio, we climb into Diaco's black Mercedes-Benz C230 and drive across the Delaware River into New Jersey. A female voice from the dashboard says, "Turn slightly right in a half a mile." We turn off the highway and into rolling farm country with deer crossing signs and soon pull into the

**"I WASN'T, LIKE, A DEALER,"
DIACO SAYS. "I WASN'T OUT
ON THE STREET CORNER."**

driveway of a giant house on a sparsely developed strip—a former home of an associate of manager and label owner Chris Cardillo, she explains. “It’s just a place they’re keeping me since it’s so close to Philly.”

Inside the dramatic entryway, with a chapel-styled skylight and sweeping central staircase, two leopard-colored Bengal cats come running up to nuzzle Diaco. The place looks fit for a wealthy family of five and is furnished with showpiece sectionals, marble-topped coffee-tables and four-poster beds. Huge packed cardboard boxes also lie in every room. “It definitely doesn’t feel like home,” Diaco says, unnecessarily.

She divides all her time here between the kitchen and a second-floor bedroom—a room that does, in fact, look fit for a mafia princess: queen-sized bed with a clamshell-carved headboard, twin marble-topped night tables with gilded legs, huge matching vanity, widescreen TV. There’s also a stack of books: *Bad Girl: Confessions of a Teenage Delinquent*, *Prophets of the Hood*, *Ego Trip’s Book of Rap Lists* and *10-to-20 Minutes in Crochet*. A pile of magazines includes an XXL with jailed rapper Shyne on the cover and a *National Enquirer* with the headline CRIME PAYS FOR J-DIA.

The kitchen, too, it must be said, is straight from the set of *The Sopranos*: central island, picture window, spacious counters. You can almost see Carmela making a salad. An avid cook, Diaco has a small library of cookbooks sitting on one of the counters. On the central island countertop there’s a manila folder labeled “Beats for Sale From Young Xavier,” an upright paper towel rack and—*Blender* notes in its recorder—a big pile of cash.

“It’s not a pile!” she says, pointing out that it’s merely two or three bills (although the bills do feature Ben Franklin). “Don’t make me look like I’m in the mob!”

OK, she’s not in the mob. But Diaco’s background—Jersey suburb, rich Italian family, powerful dad named Anthony—certainly does beg comparison to a certain popular HBO show. A comparison not exactly defused by a label name like Forget About It. We ask if, given her ambitions, these associations aren’t ... helpful, in some way.

“I think it actually hurts me,” she says. “Because that’s not who I am at all.” She claims not to manipulate tawdry images for personal gain. “I personally do not play on the Italian thing,” she says. “What I know to be Italian is just a big family where as soon as you walk in the room you feel love. It sounds corny but it’s true. That’s what I know of being Italian and what I’m proud of.”

Here in her echoing borrowed mansion, Diaco seems far indeed from the room-filling love she grew up with—although the cats are doing their best to make up for it. These days, she rises at 10, fields whatever correspondence her manager gives her and heads over to Simon Illa’s to record. When she’s done she comes home to this spooky house, cooks,



“Wait till my probation officer sees this shirt ...”



Julia leaves court in March 2006 after being sentenced to five years’ probation.

watches *The King of Queens* and goes to bed.

This is not the lifestyle of a gangsta-brat partygirl but someone very focused on stardom. This is what manager Chris Cardillo says will make her succeed. “There are people just as talented, more talented, less talented,” he says. “But she has drive and she has star quality. She has ‘it.’ Like, if you ever read Randy Jackson’s book—the guy from *American Idol*—people who are stars have ‘it.’ And if you don’t have ‘it,’ you’re not gonna become a star. She has ‘it.’ That’s what she has.”

Maybe. She definitely has something—drive, brio, gall, insanity. Not every 20-year-old without a record to her name would be quite so poised fielding questions from a national magazine, quite so confident stating her case, managing soundbites and handling the various tasks of image maintenance. She really seems to feel she deserves it. Which, in some strange kind of post-E! calculus, may actually mean that she does.

We remind her of the fact that, without the arrest, we wouldn’t be here interviewing her in the first place.

“Mm-hmm,” she nods, serenely. “But you would have eventually.” [BLENDER]



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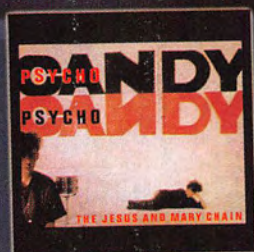
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111

BUSTA RHYMES

Woo-ha! He cut his dreadlocks and signed on with Dr. Dre. Now this rap weirdo sounds like everyone else.

★★★



125

DEPECHE MODE

They mixed synthesizers with mascara, and tawdry hooks with S&M lyrics. No wonder they were huge! A look back.

★★★★★



130

THE RACONTEURS

What happens when Jack White loses the missus (er, sister) and hits the road with the boys? His new band, live.

★★★★

THE GUIDE

THEY MAKE 'EM. WE REVIEW 'EM



DISAPPEARING ACT

RADIOHEAD FRONTMAN DISMISSES BAND, MAKES WORLD'S QUIETEST "SOLO" ALBUM

THOM YORKE

THE ERASER ★★★

XL

WHY WOULD THOM Yorke make a solo album? Even before its release, he sounded abashed about it: "I don't wanna hear that word 'solo,'" he wrote in an e-mail to Radiohead's fan club. "Doesn't sound right." Fine, then—the dictionary bends to his will. But why would he make an album without a band so influential their imitators are practically a genre, who still record and tour with him and appear to be entirely under his creative control? Throughout history, from John Lennon to Richie Sambora to Justin Tim-



berlake, a solo album—ooh, sorry, an *unaccompanied, non-band album*—usually presents ideas and styles a musician can't express within a group. It's not as if Radiohead keep hiding all of Yorke's songs on B-sides.

One of his recent lyrical obsessions in Radiohead, though, has been the annihilation of the self, from *Kid A*'s "How to Disappear Completely" ("I'm not here/This isn't happening") to the subtitle of *Hail to the Thief*'s "Go to Sleep" ("Little Man Being Erased"), and it's hard to convincingly evoke invisibility when you're backed by a stadium band. So he's made them disappear, too. *The Eraser* is a record about holes, silences, absences—its nine tracks usually don't involve much more than a couple of cold, trembling synthesizers and tinny loops, a pitty-patting drum machine and a layer or three of Yorke's restless mutter and keen. In places, it sounds as if he took Radiohead's last album, 2003's *Hail to the Thief*, and applied White-Out to each of

performances, check; something that couldn't have been done with the rest of the band, check. What's that other thing a don't-say-solo album needs? Ah, yes—songs. Unfortunately, most of *The Eraser* is half-finished sketches, dressed up with a few of Nigel Godrich's subtle production tricks. Radiohead's spectacular command of texture and details has let them discard conventional songwriting on their last few albums. That doesn't fly here, because Yorke works with a drastically limited palette, playing nearly every instrument on the album. He finds a minimal groove and melody in the first 20 seconds of each track, then hangs tight until he runs out of words.

Occasionally, he's grimly eloquent, as on "Atoms for Peace," which offers something like a gesture of devotion: "Peel all of your layers off/I want to eat your artichoke heart." The one overtly political song is also about involuntary disappearance. "Harrowdown Hill" is named after the place where Dr. David Kelly, a British weapons expert and Iraq WMD skeptic, was found dead in 2003. "You will be dispensed with/When you've become inconvenient," Yorke snaps.

Mostly, though, he just sounds distracted and distressed: "This is fucked up, fucked up," he chants in "Black Swan." It's a perverse, frosty, hunched-over little record. Yorke's specialty is evoking alienation, but *The Eraser* even negates its audience—step up close, and it'll tell you to back off. Back in 1998, when Radiohead were still a hyper-dramatic guitar band, its stripped-down electronics would have been a refreshing shock; they're not anymore. The inchoate songs Yorke treats starkly and seriously suggest another standard reason for recording a side project: as a way to release not-quite-there material without smudging a first-rate group's name.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD: "Analyse," "Atoms for Peace"

THE ERASER IS A PERVERSE, FROSTY, HUNCHED-OVER LITTLE RECORD.

his four bandmates' parts. Radiohead's arrangements typically reach their dramatic peaks via grand gestures and dynamic surges; Yorke's create emphasis by stripping away as much as they dare.

What's left is his magnificently misshapen voice, naked and ashamed. Between occasional bursts of gliding falsetto, he sings as if he's cringing, swallowing his words. The album's first phrase is "Please excuse me"; on the closing "Cymbal Rush," he's so mush-mouthed it's nearly impossible to make out the lyrics. But as the refrain of the title track puts it, "The more you try to erase me/The more that I appear." That's the paradox of a reluctant frontman like Yorke—the more he shrivels away from the spotlight, the more attention he commands.

So: fully realized aesthetic, check; striking

THE SCORE

★★★★★	CLASSIC
★★★★	GREAT
★★★	GOOD
★★	MEDIOCRE
★	FOUL

BEENIE MAN

UNDISPUTED ★★½

VIRGIN

The homophobic dancehall superstar who once sang "kill batty-fucker" keeps his eyes focused on the opposite sex

Two years ago, Beenie Man was targeted by gay activists incensed by the widespread homophobia in Jamaican dancehall music. Concerts were canceled, the idea of criminal charges was bandied about and his record label issued an apology that Beenie's reps quickly retracted. On his first major-label release since the scrutiny, he seems humbled, or at least tamed. It's his thinnest set in years, all but forswearing anything that could be considered controversial in favor of toothless club tracks about his love of heterosexual ladies. Sometimes he's genial ("Girls," featuring Akon, the Senegalese crooner of thug songs) or lascivious ("Hmm Hmm"), but he's never subtle. And so, even though his vocals are as gymnastic as ever, they're in service of a more familiar rudeness, one that doesn't even elicit protests anymore.

JON CARAMANICA

DOWNLOAD: "Chaka Dance"

RAY CASH

C.O.D.: CASH ON DELIVERY

★★★½

GHEE-O-VISION/COLUMBIA/SONY URBAN

Affable street tales from rap's answer to the Keebler Elf

Look out, hip-hop—the revenge of the nerds is underway. First came Kanye West's skateboarding homey, Lupe Fiasco; now there's Ray Cash, a rookie Cleveland with funny glasses, a lazy Southern baritone and a great face for radio. Cash cares too much to be a real gangsta: Single "Bumpin' My Music," about the simple pleasures of cruising to your favorite tunes, hides a grin behind its gritted teeth, while even pro forma crack rhymes like "Fiends, Fiends, Fiends" boast an affection for the 'hood that's far from the predatory nihilism of Young Jeezy or the Clipse. He's the rare MC who refuses to take himself seriously, and the hook from mixtape hit "Sex Appeal" captures his sly appeal perfectly:



'HEAD GAMES

WISH *OK COMPUTER* WERE MORE RASTA? THINK *KID A* COULD USE SOME BANJO? SO DO THESE WEIRD TRIBUTE ACTS!

RODEOHEAD "HARD N PHIRM"

As the clever moniker hints, a bluegrass medley of Radiohead covers. Recorded by two comedians, it includes a fiddle-riddled "Paranoid Android" and a banjo-heavy "Creep." Now playing on an unfunny college-radio show near you.

CHRISTOPHER O'RILEY TRUE LOVE WAITS AND HOLD ME TO THIS

This classical pianist's two Radiohead albums appeal to a pretentious notion: Rock needs to be legitimized by high-brows and batons. Perfect for boutique-hotel lobbies.

EASY STAR ALL-STARS RADIODREAD

An all-reggae version of *OK Computer* aimed at college kids whose bong playlists go from "Get Up, Stand Up" into "Karma Police." But there's something very un-irie about setting Yorke's paranoiac poetry to dub grooves.

JONAH WEINER

Who gwan
test Karma
Police?





Comets on Fire: this photo thankfully not scratch 'n' sniff.

"I'm a pimp," he drawls, "... in my own fucking mind."

JOSH EELLS

DOWNLOAD: "Bumpin' My Music" feat. Scarface, "The Bomb" feat. Yummy

COMETS ON FIRE

AVATAR ★★★★★

SUB POP

Unhinged lysergic rockers take a chill pill, along with some other pharmaceuticals

San Francisco-based Comets on Fire play West Coast psychedelia that's rooted in the '60s but too threatening to warm the hearts of hippies. On their fourth album the band cool it a bit, tempering their ferocious squalls and scraping the distortion off of Ethan Miller's blues-blemished vocals. If their ultraviolet jams can sometimes get lost in the haze, here they're balanced with more crisp songcraft—"Jaybird" is skittering jazzbo boogie, while on "Sour Smoke," Miller and Ben Chasny's twin guitars interlace like lovesick snakes. But the best moment may be the album's first, when the howling "Dogwood Rust" somehow manages to punch in at that magical, higher-plane moment that lesser jams take 10 minutes to reach.

ERIK DAVIS

DOWNLOAD: "Dogwood Rust," "Jaybird," "Holy Teeth"

CSS

CANSEI DE SER SEXY ★★★★★

SUB POP

Trashy, uproarious electro-punk from Brazil

Their name is short for the title of their album, which translates as "Tired of Being Sexy," but don't believe it; for this São Paulo crew (five women, one man), "tired" means they'd rather cut out the flirtatious e-mails and IMs and get down to frantically humping your leg. They're not the kind of band that ages well, and they don't give a fuck: Their zero-attention-span chants are distilled from prefab electro-disco, cheap party drugs, webcam porn and pirated punk rock MP3s, and one hot summer



Field Mob: "We really need a lawnmower."

THE CD WE'RE TOTALLY GAY FOR

FIELD MOB

LIGHT POLES AND PINE TREES ★★★★★

DISTURBING THA PEACE/GEFFEN

Whimsy and insight from Ludacris-approved goofballs

Alongside rap's recent return of the street comes the return of the street eccentric. Georgia duo Field Mob—Smoke and Shawn Jay—are without peer, pairing the folksy charm of early Dungeon Family with the comedy of Biz Markie. Field Mob has music that, like their boss Ludacris, is a fellow Georgia loudmouth, is bizarre and big all at once, teeming with phenomenally clever and unexpected lyrics. Ignore the grinning attempts at club fare: "So What," a toothless collaboration with Ciara, rings false. Field Mob thrive at rap's margins, both topical ("Blacker the Berry" is a devastating song about black-on-black skin-color discrimination) and stylistic ("Eat 'Em Up, Beat 'Em Up," which is like 50 Cent thug-seduction refracted through a funhouse lens). Even conventional fare like the better-than-thou taunt "1, 2, 3," has lessons: "Here's a mirror and a map/God and find yourself."

JON CARAMANICA

DOWNLOAD: "Blacker the Berry," "Baby Bend Over"

is all they need. Compiled from two Brazilian discs, CSS's American debut is mostly in uneven but riotous English: "Lick lick lick my art-tit! Suck suck suck my art-hole!" yips their singer, identified only as Lovefoxxx.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD: "Art Bitch," "Let's Make Love and Listen to Death From Above"

CURSIVE

HAPPY HOLLOW ★★★★★

SADDLE CREEK

Emo concept CD imagines church confessions as punk rock tunes

Tim Kasher of Cursive kickstarted Omaha, Nebraska's indie-rock community in 1993 with post-punkers *Slowdown* Virginia, a major inspiration to his then-13-year-old pal Conor Oberst. With Cursive, Kasher has been making emo for adults ever since 2000's excellent crumbling-marriage-themed *Domestica*. His latest aims higher: It's a song cycle about a congregation of small-town Christians who don't measure up to code, including a terrified military recruit, an unhappy working-class wife, a resigned male hooker and a chaplain facing his own *Brokeback Mountain*. As one of rock's great storytellers, Kasher prefers complicated empathy to easy anti-Church dogma. And musically, his furiously gear-shifting punk-pop, full of horn blasts and arty production tricks by Bright Eyes' Mike Mogis, never fails to rock the sermon.

WILL HERMES

DOWNLOAD: "Bad Sects," "Dorothy Dreams of Tornadoes," "Big Bang"

EIGHTEEN VISIONS

EIGHTEEN VISIONS ★★★★★

EPIC

Metal brats play chicken with the mainstream

Following the example set by fellow mall-metal successes My Chemical Romance and Avenged Sevenfold, this Orange County fivesome spit-shine their tortured, sludgy riffs with market-savvy precision on their major-label debut. Despite its beefed-up guitars and stadium-ready drums, though, it isn't quite the TRL concession message-board skeptics will claim: Even when his bandmates echo the lush power-ballad sonics of "November Rain," front-man James Hart sounds as if he's sneering "Welcome to the Jungle"; the pissy SoCal sleaze in his voice preserves the music's raw basement-show edge. "You motherfucker, you've lost all →

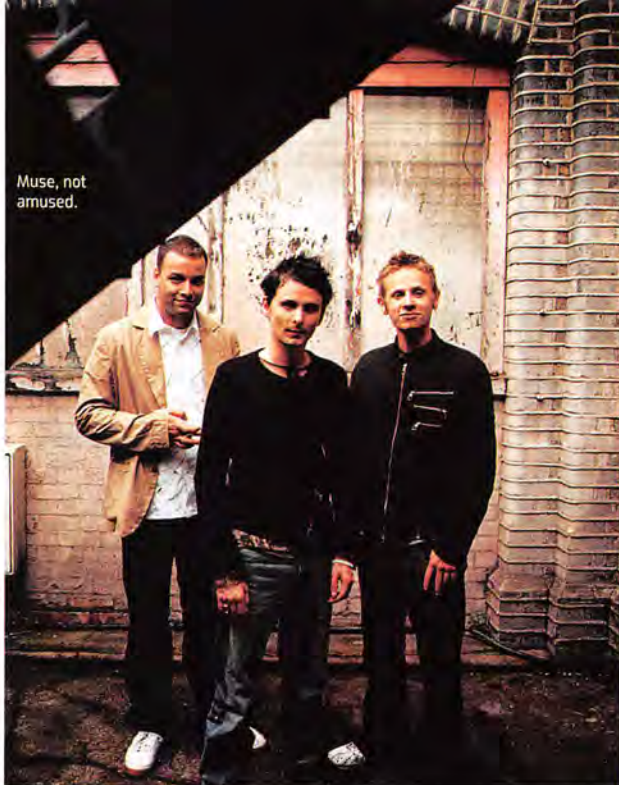


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NIVEA FOR MEN MORE EVOLVED SKINCARE

Muse, not amused.



BLAST OFF

A ROCK OPERA ABOUT ANDROIDS AND OZONE

MUSE

BLACK HOLES AND REVELATIONS ★★☆☆

WARNER BROS.

A FEW YEARS ago, Busta Rhymes was pop's most consistent prophet of apocalypse, but now that baton has passed to three young Brits whose heads are bloated by Rachmaninov, Queen and Zardoz. Their last record, 2003's *Absolution*, featured songs called "Apocalypse Please" and "Time Is Running Out," and their astonishing fourth album opens with frontman Matt Bellamy squalling, "You will burn in hell for your sins/ You must pay for your crimes against the earth," over a killer-robot electro throb. In Muse's worldview, if environmental meltdown doesn't get you, then aliens will.

Muse are a progressive-rock band who force themselves to write pop songs, and *Black Holes* strikes the motherlode. Like a questing 1970s double disc compacted into 45 brutally efficient minutes, it has the momentum of a meteor. To take one three-song run, "Starlight" is an intergalactic love song that suggests U2 wearing jetpacks; "Supermassive Black Hole" is the falsetto disco-metal floor-shaker you'd get if Nine Inch Nails' "Closer" was rebuilt by the Scissor Sisters; and "Map of the Problematique" (Muse's titles are always a flamboyant joy) is Depeche Mode taking orders from Darth Vader. The closing troika is the soundtrack for a sci-fi spaghetti western, gunning for the stars with flamenco guitar, mariachi horns and laser-beam keyboard solos.

Like the Darkness, Muse are Queen fans who always say yes to another excess, but they do it with a poker face. For all its absurdity (the six-minute finale glories in the name "Knights of Cydonia"), *Black Holes* is fueled by innocent joy, bulletproof self-belief and, for the first time in their career, heroic optimism. The message of "Assassin," which calls for the planet's Travis Bickles to rise up and dispatch the "demonocracy," and the space-rock power ballad "Invincible" is that Armageddon might be averted if the right people make a stand. It's a protest record in cosmic clothing.

DORIAN LYNESKEY

DOWNLOAD: "Starlight," "Invincible," "Supermassive Black Hole"

New Releases The Guide



Golden Smog ignore the restraining order.

you loved," he sings in "Burned Us Alive," seemingly taunting the Top 40 itself.

MIKAEL WOOD

DOWNLOAD: "Broken Hearted," "Burned Us Alive"

JAMES FIGURINE

MISTAKE, MISTAKE, MISTAKE, MISTAKE ★★☆☆

PLUG RESEARCH

Spry synthesizer pop from a robo boy gone solo

In 2003, as the Postal Service, Jimmy Tamborello and Death Cab for Cutie singer Ben Gibbard recorded *Give Up*, a shiny indie-electronica record of sad songs made by even sadder-sounding software, which went on to sell three quarters of a million copies. Using the alias James Figurine, this is Tamborello's solo move. Call it second-day delivery: Where the Postal Service was direct and blue, *Mistake* is more elliptical, proudly crawling deep into its sleepy, blippy furrows. Figurine doesn't really sing; he just insinuates and whispers his stray thoughts and transient regrets, and whatever he can't do, friends like Rilo Kiley's Jenny Lewis help him with (on "You Again"). This is beautiful, baffling late-night music for shy boys and robots.

RJ SMITH

DOWNLOAD: "55566688833," "White Ducks," "All the Way to China"

GOLDEN SMOG

ANOTHER FINE DAY ★★☆☆

LOST HIGHWAY

Alt-Americana stalwarts unfurrow their serious brows, feast on '70s flashbacks

"Supergroups" are generally overblown ego-machines (Velvet

Revolver) or we're-just-goo-f'n' throwaways (the rest). The long-lived Midwestern collective Golden Smog avoid either extreme. Their 1992 covers EP earned their name, conjuring the sparkly pot-haze of vintage L.A. rock: a little bit glam, a little bit country. This fourth release cultivates the same flavor on originals and a gorgeous Kinks song ("Strangers"). The stars are the Jayhawks' Gary Louris and Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, whose main outfits ooze Art and Sincerity and who consequently benefit from the company of cheesy AM radio homages ("Corvette," featuring Soul Asylum's Dan Murphy) and pop-psych psychedelia ("Beautiful Mind," featuring unsung Minneapolis rock hero Kraig Jarret Johnson). And the two Louris/Tweedy writing collaborations stand with the best work of both, suggesting that both should keep huffing this smog.

WILL HERMES

DOWNLOAD: "Strangers," "Listen Joe," "Frying Pan Eyes"

ADAM GREEN

JACKET FULL OF DANGER ★★

ROUGH TRADE

The world's second-biggest Jessica Simpson hater is the obnoxious little brother you never wanted

Wiseguy folkie Adam Green wrote a novelty-hit song dissing Jessica →

I LOVE THIS CD!

KEVIN BACON

WOLF MOTHER
WOLF MOTHER INTERSCOPE

"They remind me of Led Zeppelin. It's heavy but not too heavy. It really rocks."



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Owen Wilson, moments before sobbing in pain.



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OWEN WILSON

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New Releases The Guide

Jurassic 5 guest star on Prison Break.



LeToya: An orphan of Destiny's Child.



Simpson because she "faked it," but his fourth solo album since the demise of irreverent NYC duo the Moldy Peaches cultivates a level of disingenuousness Simpson could achieve only as a spokeswoman for the Encyclopedia Britannica. Green delivers his surrealist, Beck-ish lyrics ("Fellas in umbrellas in the middle of the night/Whatcha gonna do when the Mennonites bite") in a baritone croon that spills sarcasm, as if he can't believe he's getting paid to sing this stuff. And each brief song is slathered in enough schmaltzy strings and lounge piano to flood the Vegas strip. But Green manages to charm even as he annoys, so when he offers a straight cover of Beat Happening's sweet indie love song "Cast a Shadow," his sardonic asshole side is actually sorta missed.

AMY PHILLIPS

DOWNLOAD: "White Women"

BILLY JOEL

12 GARDENS LIVE ***½

COLUMBIA

The Piano Man plays "Piano Man" one ... more ... frigging ... time

"Billy Joel Beats the Bootleggers!" screams the press release for his new album, a statement that would be totally true if Billy Joel bootleggers existed. In fact, this double-CD live set commemorating Joel's sold-out stand at Madison Square Garden this past April is the latest naked gambit by Columbia Records to wring money out of Joel's greatest hits, and it's getting unseemly: There have been at least a dozen compilations in the past 20 years, as well as three previous live albums featuring much of the same material included here, in indistinguishable versions. Of course, Joel is an old pro, and

the best songs ("Movin' Out," the Beatles pastiche "Laura") still pack an almighty pop punch. But does anyone—even "the bootleggers"—really want to hear another note-for-note rendition of "Piano Man"?

JODY ROSEN

DOWNLOAD: "Movin' Out (Anthony's Song)," "An Innocent Man"

JURASSIC 5

FEEDBACK **

INTERSCOPE

Wish you could freeze time? So do rap's answer to the Be Sharps!

There will never be anything menacing about a rap quintet that can call Rockapella bosom buddies, and that's fine with this L.A. crew, tagged as "barbershop hip-hop" for their hokey harmonizing and mic-passing styles. For the past decade, J5 have served up progressive, playground-safe rap—or, more bluntly, bland rants about the old school. Minus longtime DJ Cut Chemist, they've installed sharp, funk-laced production that jacks Curtis Mayfield and scraps the erratic Latin and samba experiments they've attempted in the past. Too bad they think that the only hip-hop worth getting down to was made 15 years ago: Their nostalgia is occasionally endearing but usually curdles into crotchiness (the lively but self-defeating "Where We At"). And when they do bust out of a strict purist mold, the best they deliver is ... a Dave Matthews cameo? SEAN FENNESSEY
DOWNLOAD: "Radio," "Gotta Understand"

CHRIS KNIGHT

ENOUGH ROPE ***½

DRIFTER'S CHURCH

Brilliantly conflicted country from a snarler with a redneck heart but a blue-state mind

Chris Knight has recorded three albums in the shadow of his hero Steve Earle, with whom he shares a gravelly voice, a hard-charging roots-rock sound and a lefty's eye for irony. But while Knight is hella pissed, he isn't entirely at home in Earle's big-stroke rabble-rousing. An ex-coalmine claims inspector from Slaughter, Kentucky, he populates his songs with small-town tough guys who get wisdom only a few AA meetings or foreclosures or bad votes after they realize being tough is no longer enough. Knight lightens his red-state

existentialism with beer-me rave-ups and ballads that can seem pro forma, but the betrayal in a song like "Dirt," which connects rural degradation and corporate pollution, is all his

own. He wants answers; he's just not sure they'll ever come easy.

JON DOLAN

DOWNLOAD: "Jack Blue," "Dirt"

LETOYA

LETOYA ***

CAPITOL

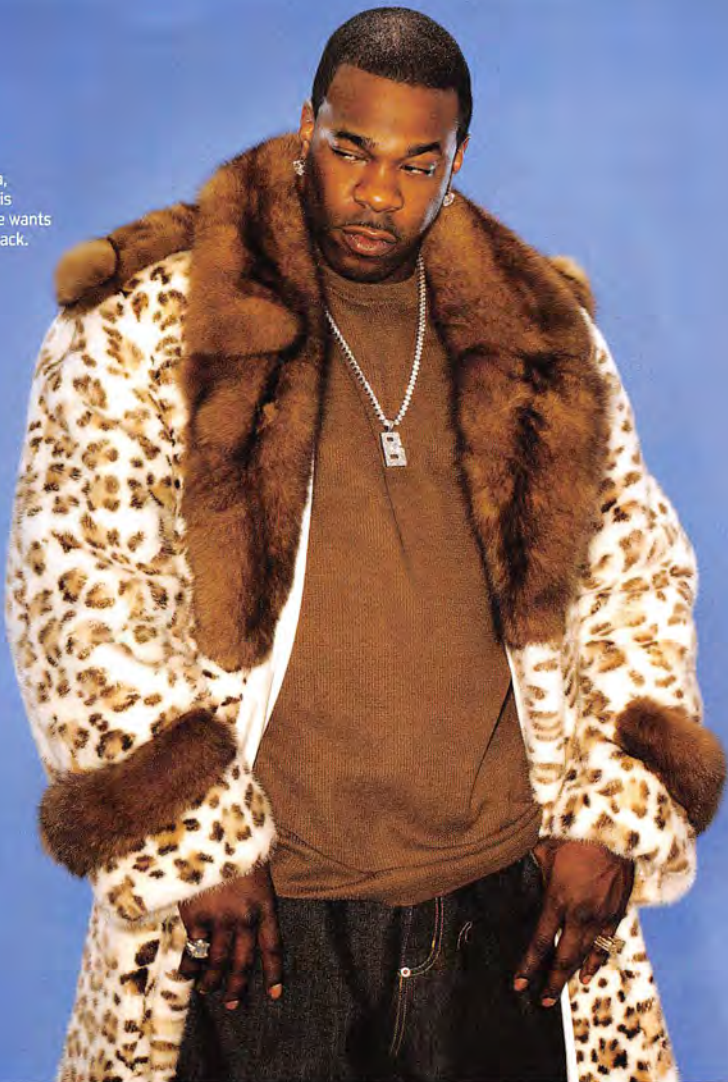
A Destiny's Child outcast finally gets her shot after six years on the outs

LeToya Luckett was an early casualty of one of pop's most efficient member-shedding machines, kicked to the curb →

ASTONISHING FACT!

Working at an indie label in the '90s, Jurassic 5's DJ Nu-Mark tried to sign a young rapper named Kanye West. But his label passed. D'oh!

Hey, Busta,
Aunt Phyllis
called. She wants
her coat back.



EXTREME MAKEOVER

A GREAT CHARACTER ACTOR BIDS TO BE A LEADING MAN

BUSTA RHYMES

THE BIG BANG ★★★

AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE

WHEN HE MADE his solo debut in 1996, Busta Rhymes was unafraid to look, act and sound like Chewbacca passing a kidney stone. A storm of dreadlocks, teeth and tongue, he broke up light-speed syncopations with pregnant pauses and worked a rippling matrix of cackles and growls, his tough-guy boasts always second to his comical charisma. But his albums hit a platinum ceiling when they didn't cool off at gold—not bad for a newbie but irritating to a veteran.

So Busta—who has gotten at least as much press of late for the February 5 murder of his bodyguard as he has for his music—undergoes an Extreme Makeover: Dr. Dre Edition. The gangsta-pop mastermind signed him and took the reins, but while Dre is unstoppable at breaking protégés, Busta presents a challenge: how to preserve his idiosyncracies while erasing his clownish, novelty-store ticks, especially when it's impossible to say

where one stops and the other starts?

The result is a much more conventional Busta. Too often, his brags go unsupported by wordplay, and he indulges in the kind of rote threats and pussy-lust—"Get You Some" is an opening salute to "money, cars, clothes, sexy broads"—he resisted 10 years ago, when they were at least fresh. Busta's still a few woo-ha's left of center—and the trend toward flattening his freakiness began years ago anyway, when he started balladeering with Mariah Carey and product-placing Courvoisier into his rhymes. Here, at least, he's trading jerky experimentalism for the shiniest production of his career, courtesy of Dre, Swizz Beatz, Timbaland and will.i.am: Snares cracklike robot slapfights, death-ray synths roar (and Stevie Wonder and the late Rick James show up for wistful cameos).

It sounds great, but Busta is often awkwardly unrecognizable. Hip-hop has change written into its DNA, but in a genre that badly needs inspired weirdos, it's worth mourning the normalizing of one of the weirdest.

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD: "How We Do It Over Here"



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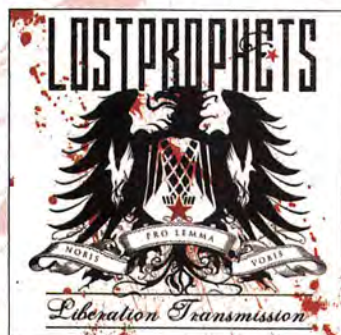
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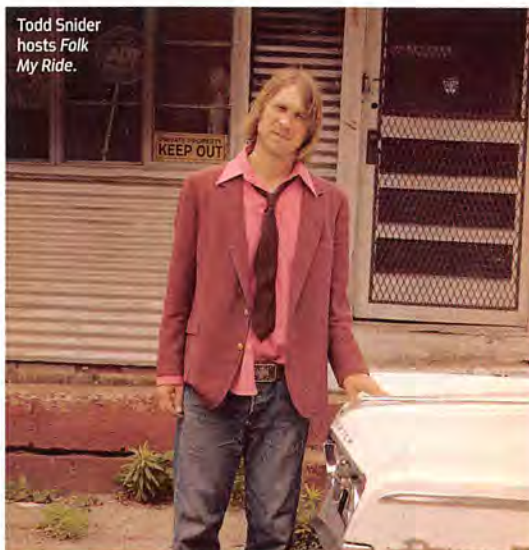
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hosts Folk
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TODD SNIDER

THE DEVIL YOU KNOW ○○○○½

NEW DOOR/UME

AT 39, AUSTIN-SCHOOLED, Nashville-based Todd Snider has been barnstorming the Southern guitar-bard circuit for nearly 20 years. Say he's a tough-'n'-tender singer-songwriter who convinces the roadhouse crowd he's a hang-loose rogue. Either way he's smarter and funnier than his main claim to fame, 1994's "Talking Seattle Grunge Rock Blues," a Woody Guthrie-styled novelty about an alternative band whose gimmick is refusing to play.

Snider broke through in 2004 with *East Nashville Skyline*, and *The Devil You Know* is at least as terrific. John Prine and Steve Earle are reference points, but Snider's got his own just-folks shtick—he's at once more critical of his chosen losers and more celebratory. "There's a war going on that the poor can't win," the title song shouts, and whether band-backed or solo acoustic, the feckless drawl Snider has nurtured is perfect for detailing and embodying "a different kind of American dream." A drifter connects with a hooker he dated in high school; an ex-con warns his new boss to watch his mouth if he wants his drywall hung; and a tweaking stickup man talks his buddies into doing it again: "Did we get arrested? No we did not/We didn't shoot anyone, we didn't get shot."

Snider even utilizes the same drawl and logic to throw a chill into a different kind of war report. "You Got Away With It" begins by recalling a prank in which three drunken frat brothers beat up a crybaby with zero consequences: "Aside from that one hippie, we never really hurt anyone/Well, there's that other thing that I won't even say." Only a Camp David reference makes clear which Yale chum the narrator is addressing. If only it were as clear just what "new thing" he expects the chum to get away with next.

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD: "You Got Away With It," "The Devil You Know," "The Highland Street Incident"



Los Lonely Boys:
Spanish for
"the lonely boys."

after sharing Beyoncé's shadow on the 1999 hits "Bills, Bills, Bills" and "Say My Name." On the Houston singer's long-awaited (at least by her) debut, she trumpets a simple refrain of self-worth: I'm good enough, I'm hot enough and, doggonit, local rappers like me. LeToya's pinched, insecure voice adds humanity to her litely sizzurped anthems of emotional resilience and romantic dedication, with a bevy of H-Town heavies (Slim Thug, Paul Wall) to toughen up the sense of strength through struggle. If talent got her only so far, the homies keep her whole.

JON DOLAN

DOWNLOAD: "Torn," "I'm Good"

LOS LONELY BOYS

SACRED ○○○

EPIC

The mighty men of San Angelo, Texas, rarely let a solo run longer than it takes to finish a beer

Los Lonely Boys have a vision for America: a lime in every Corona, a wah-wah guitar solo on every jukebox and what happens in Texico stays in Texico. The brothers Garza—guitarist Henry, bassist JoJo and drummer Ringo—remade pedal-stomping jams as dinner-date pop by streamlining stodgy Lone Star axe-slinging into tight packages that don't confuse proving their manhood with testing your endurance. *Sacred*, the follow-up to their multiplatinum 2003 debut, adds flourishes like the country-tinged rocker "Outlaws" and the Havana slow dance "I Never Found a Woman," but the bros stick to the script they wrote three years ago—Santana solos minus girly cameos, Los Lobos vocal warmth minus L.A. artsiness. Just *tres hombres* messing with the blues as politely as any real man can.

JON DOLAN

DOWNLOAD: "Diamonds," "My Way"



The New York Dolls
... or the future
Pussycat Dolls?

NEW YORK DOLLS

ONE DAY IT WILL PLEASE US
TO REMEMBER EVEN THIS
★★★★

ROADRUNNER

The rare band reunion that brings
out the best in all concerned

In the early '70s, the New York Dolls pre-invented punk by rocking brief, funny, catchy songs with simultaneously compelling and inept panache, never quite in tune or on the beat. With headman David Johansen a far more practiced and studied (and aged) singer and the others in his reconstituted band all accomplished musicians, the old sense of inspired derangement is muted on the first new Dolls album in 32 years. But from the orgasmic "We're All in Love" to the painfully mortal "Take a Good Look at My Good Looks," they're all clearly Dolls for life. "Dance Like a Monkey" typifies Johansen's mindplay—about jungle music, absolutely, but also about evolution, and a "pretty little creationist." And on a slow one, he unveils his hidden credo: "You've got the human condition/ Boy I feel sorry for you."

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD: "Gotta Get Away From Tommy," "Maimed Happiness," "Dance Like a Monkey"

JIM NOIR

TOWER OF LOVE ★★★½

BARSUK

Solitary pop wizard dreams in the English suburbs, plots revenge on imaginary enemies

Twenty-four-year-old Alan Roberts, a.k.a. Jim Noir, is an adorably surly one-man band. On the opening track of his addictive debut—which collects



Pet Shop
Boys: "Terribly
droll derby."
"Likewise, chap."

the EPs that made him a record-geek hero last year in his native England—he promises a beat-down if you step on his turf. But he does it so sweetly, over sunny piano chords and swirling "ooo-ahh-ahh"s, that it could pass for a kiddie-show theme song. Later he slaps his uncooperative computer, threatens to sic his dad on a neighbor and berates the musical note of C. Because he clearly aced his Beatles/Beach Boys classes, Noir's elaborately multitracked recordings—warm with tape hiss, every instrument played by him—make his gentle bitching irresistible. No one likes a complainer, except when he writes killer songs.

WILL HERMES

DOWNLOAD: "Eanie Meany," "My Patch," "Key of C"

PERSEPHONE'S BEES

NOTES FROM THE
UNDERWORLD ★★★

COLUMBIA

Exotic songstress and excitable guitarist make throwback party music for the nostalgia-allergic

This Oakland party band fill their cocktail shaker with predictable old-time ingredients—go-go girl pop, glam and garage rock—but

the resulting cosmopolitan is surprisingly fresh and potent. Russian-born international woman of mystery Angelina Moysov affects a coquettish purr befitting a Jean-Luc Godard heroine or a Swinging London supermodel. Marrying exotic diction to opaque lyrics, the poised Moysov may rule the hive, but the real worker bee on this major-label debut is guitarist Tom Ayres. Armed with a variety of effects pedals, he evokes psychedelic surf (on "Muzika Dyla Fil'ma") and lounge shimmer (on the bossa-nova-tinged single "Nice Day"), and his amusing weakness for big, theatrical riffs keeps the album from turning too cute or precious. In a different time and place, this is how the B-52's might've turned out.

DENNIS LIM

DOWNLOAD: "Way to Your Heart," "Nice Day"

PET SHOP BOYS

FUNDAMENTAL ★★★★

RHINO

A post-9/11 tour de force from smart, graying electro pioneers

A disco manifesto for the age of terror alerts, *Fundamental* is the sleekest and wittiest album by →

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RIHANNA

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SHAKIRA FEATURING WYCLEF JEAN

5. RIDIN'

CHAMILLIONAIRE

6. WHAT YOU KNOW (AMENDED VERSION)

T.I.

7. WHAT'S LEFT OF ME

NICK LACHEY

8. BAD DAY

DANIEL POWTER

9. WHAT YOU WANT

LL COOL J

10. GIMME THAT REMIX (MAIN VERSION)

CHRIS BROWN FEATURING LIL' WAYNE

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TAPES 'N TAPES

THE LOON ☼☼☼

XL

JOSH GRIER, lead singer of Tapes 'n Tapes, follows through on every wobbly, droopy, jittery-voiced frontman in rock history. "Call me out—I can't sing in key," he taunts on the band's debut album. Like the Kinks' Ray Davies, the Violent Femmes' Gordon Gano and especially Pavement's Stephen Malkmus, he makes shakiness sound like a nerd's audacity. So it's no wonder nerd-staffed music blogs lionized this Minneapolis band last year when they released *The Loon* on their own Ibid label, leading now to an international re-release.

A good part of the audacity is recycled from proudly disheveled 1990's college rock. Tapes 'n Tapes take not just their frazzled vocals but also their low-fi mixes, fuzzed-out guitars, semi-sequitur lyrics, falsetto refrains and general air of nearly falling apart from campus kings Pavement. For variety, they switch to the galloping beat and casual shock tactics—singing "I've been a better lover with your mother"—of the Pixies.

While their sources are obvious to anyone who's studied the curriculum, Tapes 'n Tapes aren't lazy. Each succinct song follows a different crooked path, patchworking styles and twiddling with studio effects. "In Houston" unfolds as a mysterious tangle of guitar feedback and vibraphone, then veers into a neo-psychedelic march; "The Iliad" (which seems, actually, to be based on *The Odyssey*) switches between quasi-Latin pop and modest garage-rock. And "Jakov's Suite" revs up scrabbling guitars for a full minute and a half before dropping to half-speed, turning into a waltz and gradually building to a joyful chorus: "You don't move, you don't move/When you don't move, you don't move away." That's a nerd's kind of romantic triumph: like the music, shaky but sure.

JON PARELES

DOWNLOAD: "Jakov's Suite," "The Iliad"

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Rhymefest:
"Time to make
the donuts!"



Priestess hail
Satan, Pert Plus.

synth-pop elder statesmen Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe since *Very*, their 1993 coming-out opus. Split between thunderous stompers and autumnal ballads, *Fundamental* ingeniously explores political chicanery through imaginative set pieces about private relationships. "I'm With Stupid" casts British prime minister Tony Blair as the hood-winked lover in a transatlantic "special relationship." "Indefinite Leave to Remain" translates a romantic plea into the bureaucratic lingo of an asylum-seeker's application. The two best songs are brilliant, ironic matches of form and content: "Minimal" is a maximally arranged floor-filler about the ambiguous pleasures of restraint. And "Integral," inspired by the British government's proposed introduction of ID cards, uses a thumping, almost fascist groove to warn of a totalitarian nanny state.

DENNIS LIM

DOWNLOAD: "Minimal," "Integral," "Casanova in Hell"

PIMP C

PIMPALATION ★★

RAP-A-LOT/ASYLUM

Fresh out of prison, a Texas rap legend throws a hometown party ... and invites Tom Petty?

NOT AN
ACTUAL
"PIMP"

During 2005's Houston-rap boom, "Free Pimp C" was a familiar rallying cry. Someone was listening. Pimp, half of revered Texas duo UGK, finally saw sunlight in December after serving four years on a parole violation charge. In UGK, his nasal, high-pitched twang and gleeful nihilism and misogyny (his pronunciation of the word "bitch" is an art form unto itself) were foils for partner Bun B's contemplative rumble. On his

own, he's more limited: "They locked up my body but my mind never stopped," Pimp wheezes on the Tom Petty-sampling "Free," but otherwise there's disappointingly—and inexplicably—scant mention of his prison time. With its slow-banging tracks and an army of H-town stars, *Pimpalation* is a satisfying trunk-rattler but has all the hallmarks of a rush job.

TOM BREIHAN

DOWNLOAD: "Free," "Rock 4 Rock"

GRACE POTTER AND THE NOCTURNALS

NOTHING BUT THE WATER ★★★

HOLLYWOOD

New England white-blues filly tries not to turn into Norah Jones

With her sensuous, honey-dew rasp, Potter could easily be Bonnie Raitt's daughter—she's 22 and, yes, that much time has passed—and like Raitt, she's drawn to no-goods and scrubs who mess with her head (and, in one case, break her brother's ribs). She knows how to fight back, too: "Get out of my way or I'll start blasting *Cat Scratch Fever*," she wails. Too bad her music, honed when the cherubic Vermonter opened for Phish offshoots, isn't always as saucy. On her second album, the metro-nomic beats and tasteful organ and dobro solos are further proof that roots music has been thoroughly Starbucks-ized. Tellingly, the best tracks are two different versions of the cleanse-my-soul title song: one spookily a cappella, the other much closer to Stax soul than jam-band nation usually gets.

DAVID BROWNE

DOWNLOAD: "Nothing but the Water (I)," "Nothing but the Water (II)"

PRIESTESS

HELLO MASTER ★★★

RCA

The ballsiest thing to come out of Quebec since Mario Lemieux

Though their Dungeons-and-Dragons band name and album title invoke cock-rock in-jokes à la the Darkness, the debut album from this Montreal foursome plays it straight, cherry-picking the leanest aspects of '70s metal—sludgy dual-guitar riffs, layered Van Halen-style harmonies, choruses you can hang a hat on—while limiting hokum to the suitable-for-airbrushing-on-the-hood-of-a-Camaro cover art. The cowbell-inflected "Run Home" is as catchy as it is loud, and "Talk to Her" rides a single chord for nearly all of its three minutes. Growling about busted and not-yet-busted relationships with equal parts ambivalence and sensitivity, Mikey Heppner's gloriously unpolished vocals make even lines like "I get the shakes when you're not around" sound badass.

STEVE KANDELL

DOWNLOAD: "Run Home," "I Am the Night, Colour Me Black"

RHYMEFEST

BLUE COLLAR ★★

ALITO/J RECORDS

Kanye West's protégé juggles a workingman ethos and a zillion-dollar budget

Rhymefest has well-connected friends (Kanye West, celebrity DJ Mark Ronson), a Grammy (for co-writing "Jesus Walks") and the desire for you to overlook these facts and treat him like a hip-hop journeyman (even while he quietly hopes he isn't one). After all, as this 28-year-old Chicagoan learned from West, underdog status is a good place to start a rap career. But like trust-fund →

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New Releases The Guide

hipsters, he's spending a lot of money to come off humble—and top-dollar beatsmiths like Cool & Dre and Just Blaze outshine him at every turn. His common-man's-struggle raps, endearing on paper, lack vocal pizzazz. On "Brand New," West shows more charm in 16 bars than "Fest musters anywhere on the CD; unlike his protégé, Kanye is plenty comfortable showing off, and nothing succeeds like success.

JON CARAMANICA

DOWNLOAD: "Brand New"

CARINA ROUND

SLOW MOTION ADDICT ⓈⓈ

WEAPONS OF MASS ENTERTAINMENT/
INTERSCOPE

Growly English chanteuse ties us to a bedpost, lights a cigarette—and then what?

Carina Round's third full-length album is a scary little affair, a burst of empowered petulance filtered through a new-wave-punky sensibility. Round's fiery directness can be exhilarating: "Treated my body like a stolen car," she purrs on the opening track, an unnervingly direct accusation if ever there was one. "My body is an open mouth," she explains further, suggesting

Scritti Politti:
geek chic.



Carina Round
lifts some
0-lb. weights.



a cranky goddess who's not to be toyed with—a pissed-off caryatid in a crinoline. But it's not long before the novelty wears off. The songs, most of them laden with fuzzy guitar bursts like tinsel garlands, shift between melancholy teen-bedroom musings and pissed-off listen-up-bub anthems. The unspoken threat here appears to be "Better give me what I want, or I'll get depressed." It's cathartic, all right—but more for Round than for anyone else.

STEPHANIE ZACHAREK

DOWNLOAD: "Stolen Car," "Slow Motion Addict"

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Foo Fighters
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SCRITTI POLITTI

WHITE BREAD BLACK BEER

☆☆☆½

NONESUCH

The wants and worries of an aging pop savant with a brain the size of a small planet and a heart of gold

Scritti Politti frontman Green Gartside has spent 30 years trying to change the world with a synthesizer and a library card. The pixie-voiced Brit had unlikely '80s hits trying to unpack the secrets of pop with radical Marxist concepts, and these wispy home-studio tunes are similarly obsessed with the pain of desire in a world where we're spun around by systems we can't see—from global capitalism to romance itself. Over girl-group incantations, reggae lilt and courageously dinky old-school hip-hop allusions, Gartside searches for his emotional car keys, each comely coo abstracting him further from the truths he seeks. Melodies come easy, ideas keep him alive, but love stays untouchable, like the revolution itself.

JON DOLAN

DOWNLOAD: "Snow on Sun," "Cooking"

THE SLEEPY JACKSON

PERSONALITY: ONE WAS A SPIDER ONE WAS A BIRD ☆☆☆

ASTRALWERKS

Persnickety Australian out-baroque his psych-pop heroes

Luke Steele, the man who hires and fires the Sleepy Jackson's rotating cast of players, is the pastry artist of psychedelia. His band's second full-length is a monument to lavish, '70s-style confection, studded with strings, trumpets and sugared melodies—it's a gingerbread-house wall of sound. He specializes in layered harmonies, not deep lyrics, but when you can make them out, Steele's effete coos suggest it's not just bassists he has trouble getting along with but also lovers as well: "I couldn't tell you why I was so cold," he shrugs in "Miles Away," a rare (and lovely) dose of melancholy. Either way, Steele's disco-wise tracks, like the vertiginous "Play a Little Bit for Love," are the work of a gifted flirt—and, if nothing else, a master of form.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD: "Higher Than Hell," "How Was I Supposed to Know?"

TANYA STEPHENS

REBELUTION ☆☆☆

VP

Jamaican singer-songwriter, 33, calls out gay-haters and stepped-on women

If Naomi Wolf could sing witty songs and speak Jamaican patois, she'd be Tanya Stephens, the sharp-tongued songstress who's been dissecting gender roles over reggae beats since 1993. Stephens's sixth album has warring words for many—philandering husbands, indolent wives, homophobic Jamaicans—but it's above all a "rebellion" against slothful songwriting,

which Stephens is never guilty of. What she lacks in voice—her singing can be pinched and nasal—she makes up for in lyrical innovation: On a musical-comedy tune about the morning after, a doo-wop-flavored dancehall track about women who deserve their cheating men and an acoustic ballad about a boyfriend who's up in the block instead of up in his girl, Stephens affirms that "feminism" is a dirty word, in all the right ways.

BAZ DREISINGER

DOWNLOAD: "Still a Go Lose," "These Streets," "Saturday Morning"

SUFJAN STEVENS

THE AVALANCHE ☆☆☆½

ASTHMATIC KITTY

Christian pop eccentric heats up leftovers on second Prairie State companion

With two states down and 48 to go in his long march to document our big funky mess of a country, this dove-throated indie bard's already buying time with an album's worth of "shamelessly compiled" (his words) remainders from last year's much-ballyhooed *Illinois*. "I made a lot of mistakes," he admitted in →

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BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD

JOSE GONZALEZ CROSSES

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that album's wistful "Chicago"—and he makes another by including three more gorgeous but superfluous versions of that song here. Fortunately, there's still plenty of room for exquisite parables sung over lush but skronky arrangements and minimalist beats. The lyrics offset high-tech theology ("God is dead," Sufjan laments in "Dear Mr. Supercomputer"), with musings on novelist Saul Bellow and the man who discovered Pluto—it's like *School House Rock* for hip kids.

RICHARD GEHR

DOWNLOAD: "Saul Bellow," "Pittsfield"

STONE SOUR

COME WHAT(EVER) MAY ★★

ROADRUNNER

Reuniting with his first band, Slipknot frontman reveals sensitive singer-songwriter behind the mask

Between its piano intro, slow-burning power-ballad arrangement and crooning vocal, "Zzyzx Road" sounds more like early Elton John than a side-project from the freak behind metal maniacs Slipknot. But Corey Taylor isn't afraid to show his vulnerable side—"I am made of scars," claims one song—and that makes Stone Sour's sophomore effort a leap forward. Not only does Taylor sing more than shout, he likes to give listeners something to hum, so even when the songs bristle with aggression (fellow 'Knotter James Root is on guitar), Stone Sour sweeten the effect with Nickelback-sized pop hooks. Taylor isn't quite swapping his Leatherface mask for a smiley face, but he makes anger and angst seem almost fun.

J.D. CONSIDINE

DOWNLOAD: "30/30-150," "Zzyzx Road," "Hell and Consequences"

IRMA THOMAS

AFTER THE RAIN ★★½

ROUNDER

New Orleans soul great sings the post-Katrina blues

Best known for her 1962 single "It's Raining" (memorably used in Jim Jarmusch's *Down By Law*),

the "Soul Queen of New Orleans" has rain to thank for her current career boost—a mixed blessing, as the 65-year-old singer lost her home and her nightclub to floods from Hurricane Katrina, which has spiked interest in her town's music. But attention is warranted beyond pity—her voice remains a creamy wonder, and Thomas is one of the best soul-ballad singers in America. Weak arrangements and



Sufjan Stevens: "Mommy, why don't I have any friends?"

songs have been a recent problem, but less so here; it's her strongest set in years. Mixing playful blues with harder stuff, while guitarist Sonny Landreth and drummer Stanton Moore bring hometown flavor, Thomas stokes her songs slowly, making vintage numbers

like "Another Man Done Gone" and Stevie Wonder's "Shelter in the Rain" signify New Orleans and the suffering world at large.

WILL HERMES

DOWNLOAD: "Make Me a Pallet on Your Floor," "I Count the Tears"

BLENDER APPROVED

THE BEST NEW RELEASES FROM THE PAST MONTHS



DIXIE CHICKS

TAKING THE LONG WAY

COLUMBIA

Radio won't touch 'em. Haters want 'em dead. But the Bush-bashing trio return with a defiant—and lovely—seventh set.



NEIL YOUNG

LIVING WITH WAR

REPRISE

"Let's impeach the President!" shouts rock's populist curmudgeon on his very first protest album.



NELLY FURTADO

LOOSE

GEFFEN

Chirpy Canadian hottie sheds her one-hit-wonder status with this dazzling, noirish creeper, helmed by Timbaland.



T.I.

KING

GRAND HUSTLE/ATLANTIC

The Atlanta MC boasts world-beating swagger and the skills to back it up on one of the best rap CDs of the year.



DASHBOARD CONFESSIONAL

DUSK AND SUMMER

INTERSCOPE

Soaring regrets and whispered come-ons mark this fourth album from emo's heavily pomaded heartbreaker.



REGINA SPEKTOR

BEGIN TO HOPE

SIRE

For her third album, the redheaded Russian turns a devastating breakup into a torchy piano-pop triumph.

OBIE TRICE

SECOND ROUND'S ON ME ★★

SHADY/INTERSCOPE

With a bullet-grazed skull and a dead friend, Eminem's goofy protégé gets dark

Last New Year's Eve, while driving on a Detroit expressway, Obie Trice was shot in the head by an assailant who hasn't been caught. Three months later, his friend Proof was murdered in a local bar. At Proof's funeral, Trice called for an end to violence. So when he raps, "This place just ain't safe" on "There They Go"—a salute to Detroit killers featuring a dry-eyed Eminem verse about violent death—it's an intriguing ambiguity: You can't quite tell whether Trice is bragging about all the gunplay that surrounds him or lamenting it. He debuted in 2003 with a goofy single about toothless women, and here he enjoys a few silly horror-film moments ("Real creepy/Chee-chee-chee, ha-ha-ha/Jason Voorhees"), but mostly he snarls and seethes, even on the sex jams. The anti-sentimentality gets a bit relentless over 18 songs—not that you can blame Trice for wiping the smile from his face.

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD: "Outta State," "There They Go"

YUNG JOC

NEW JOC CITY ★★½

BAD BOY

Diddy-approved Atlanta rapper got Tom Cruise to dance. That makes one of us

Not a year removed from Young Jeezy's platinum-plus, up-from-slugging debut, and already Atlanta is teeming with quick studies. Yung Joc sees the change—"Y'all cats turn gangsters on ProTools/I'm a professional gangster with pro tools"—but despite his casually menacing hit "It's Goin' Down" (to which Tom Cruise danced memorably during a BET appearance) Joc is still trapping-by-the-numbers, pro forma and workmanlike. Where Jeezy sounds coolly detached or ominous, Joc sounds just plain bored. Even on the otherwise spry he-said-she-said duet "I Know You See It," he can't quite muster the nastiness the song demands. Setting Joc apart, though, is his ear for beats. He employs a cadre of comers (CKP, Chino Dolla) who've nailed his city's ascendant sound—staccato snare bursts, synths that hang like dank, viscous smoke, triumphant choruses. It can make for some great songs ("Do Ya Bad," "Dope Boy Magic"), even if the frontman here is only riding shotgun.

JON CARAMANICA

DOWNLOAD: "It's Goin' Down," "Dope Boy Magic"

BLENDER'S PROMOTIONAL SECTION

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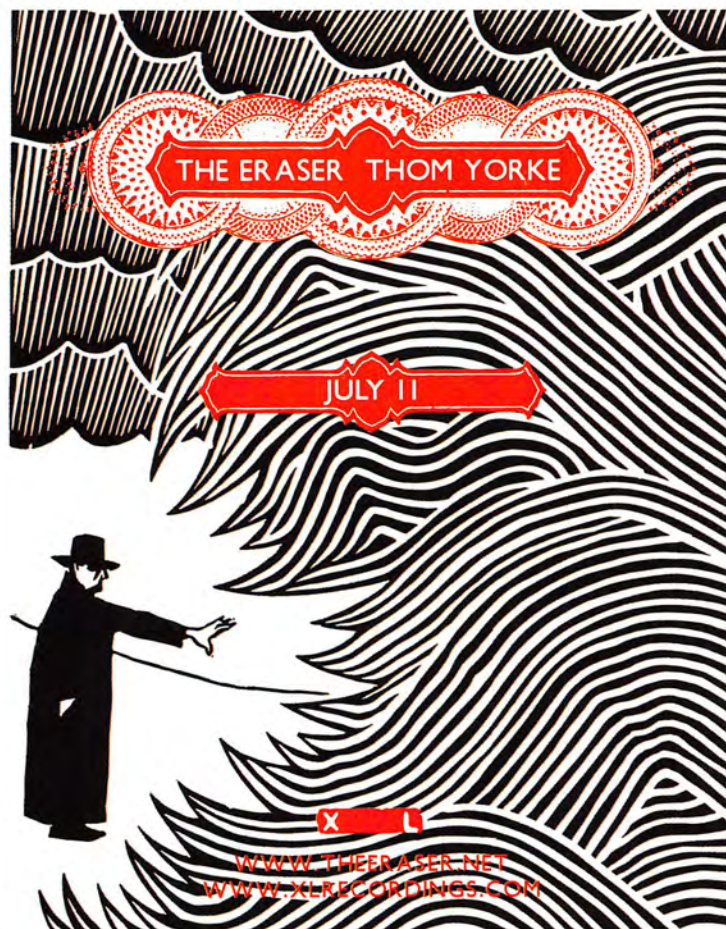


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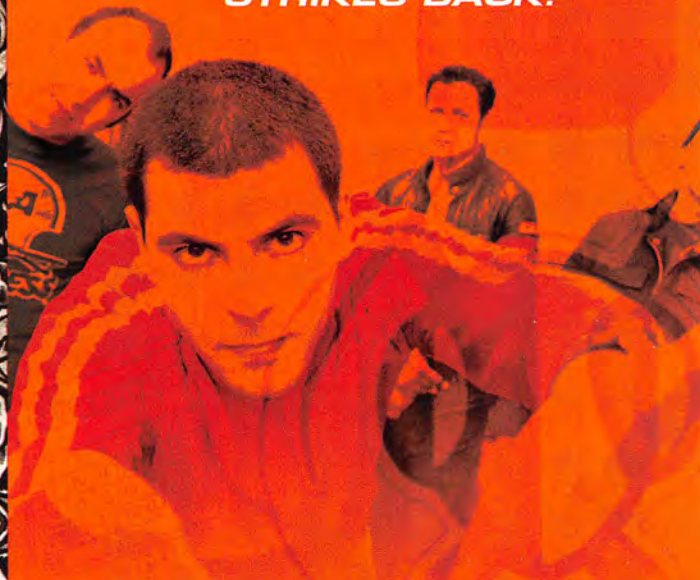
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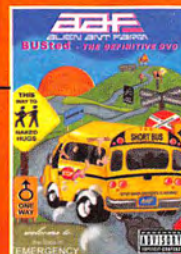
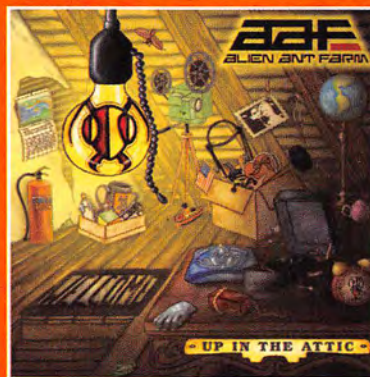
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THE **33**

MOST WANTED SONGS IN AMERICA

THIS MONTH, THE JUNK IN CHAMILLIONAIRE'S TRUNK IS NO MATCH FOR THE JUNK IN BEYONCÉ'S!



The rug really ties the room together, no?

4

CHRISTINA AGUILERA

"AIN'T NO OTHER MAN"

BACK TO BASICS

Mere mortals say "oh yeah." Xtina of the mile-deep pipes says oooh-woo-a-hey-hey-eee-yeahhh! That's the opening melismatic firebomb she tosses on her brassy new single, produced, somewhat improbably, by early-'90s hip-hop mastermind DJ Premier. In June she debuted the song on the MTV Movie Awards, dressed like Jean Harlow—catch her live, and perhaps dressed similarly, this month.

HOW WE DID IT

aolmusic.com

The Most Wanted Songs chart is based on the number of audience searches, downloads and video plays on AOLmusic.com.

POSITION	TITLE	ARTIST	ALBUM/LABEL
1	"DEJA VU"	BEYONCÉ	B-DAY COLUMBIA
2	"RIDIN'"	CHAMILLIONAIRE	THE SOUND OF REVENGE UNIVERSAL
3	"UNFAITHFUL"	RIHANNA	A GIRL LIKE ME DEF JAM
4	"AIN'T NO OTHER MAN"	CHRISTINA AGUILERA	BACK TO BASICS RCA
5	"PROMISCUOUS"	NELLY FURTADO FEAT. TIMBALAND	LOOSE GEFEN
6	"SO WHAT"	FIELD MOB FEAT. CIARA	LIGHT POLES AND PINE TREES DTP/GEFFEN
7	"HIPS DON'T LIE"	SHAKIRA	ORAL FIXATION VOL. 2 EPIC
8	"STARS ARE BLIND"	PARIS HILTON	PARIS HILTON WARNER BROS.
9	"GIMME THAT"	CHRIS BROWN	CHRIS BROWN JIVE
10	"LONDON BRIDGE"	FERGIE	THE DUTCHESS INTERSCOPE
11	"ME & U"	CASSIE	[SINGLE] BAD BOY
12	"SINGLE"	NATASHA BEDINGFIELD	UNWRITTEN EPIC
13	"HIGH"	JAMES BLUNT	BACK TO BEDLAM CUSTARD/ATLANTIC
14	"CALL ON ME"	JANET JACKSON FEAT. NELLY	20 YEARS OLD VIRGIN
15	"MOVE ALONG"	ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS	MOVE ALONG INTERSCOPE
16	"CRAZY"	GNARLS BARKLEY	ST. ELSEWHERE ATLANTIC
17	"WHAT YOU KNOW"	T.I.	KING GRAND HUSTLE/ATLANTIC
18	"ROMPE" (REMIX)	DADDY YANKEE FEAT. G-UNIT	BARRIO FINO EN DIRECTO INTERSCOPE
19	"CHASING CARS"	SNOW PATROL	EYES OPEN INTERSCOPE
20	"MIGHTY O"	OUTKAST	IDLEWILD JIVE
21	"DON'T WAIT"	DASHBOARD CONFESSIONAL	DUSK AND SUMMER INTERSCOPE
22	"GIVE IT UP TO ME"	SEAN PAUL	THE TRINITY ATLANTIC
23	"WHO KNEW"	PINK	I'M NOT DEAD JIVE
24	"I LOVE MY CHICK"	BUSTA RHYMES	THE BIG BANG AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE
25	"CROWDED"	JEANNIE ORTEGA	NO PLACE LIKE BROOKLYN HOLLYWOOD
26	"WHERE'D YOU GO"	FORT MINOR FEAT. HOLLY BROOK	THE RISING TIED WARNER BROS.
27	"IT'S GOIN' DOWN"	YUNG JOC	NEW JOC CITY ATLANTIC
28	"PUT YOUR RECORDS ON"	CORINNE BAILEY RAE	CORINNE BAILEY RAE CAPITOL
29	"SEXY LOVE"	NE-YO	IN MY OWN WORDS DEF JAM
30	"BEST FRIEND"	OLIVIA FEAT. 50 CENT	BEHIND CLOSED DOORS INTERSCOPE
31	"HONESTLY"	CARTEL	CHROMA EPIC
32	"BEEP"	PUSSYCAT DOLLS	PCD A&M
33	"I WRITE SINS, NOT TRAGEDIES"	PANIC! AT THE DISCO	A FEVER YOU CAN'T ... FUELED BY RAMEN/ATLANTIC

WEEK ENDING // SUNDAY, JULY 2



6

FIELD MOB FEAT. CIARA

"SO WHAT"

LIGHT POLES AND PINE TREES

After sampling Ray Charles post-"Gold Digger" for a lovingly dirty tribute to their home state, these two Albany, Georgians are back with an uptempo club track featuring Princess Crunkavere herself, Ciara. Catch them this summer on their guest-studded club tour.

13

JAMES BLUNT

"HIGH"

BACK TO BEDLAM

Forget selling out Madison Square Garden: You haven't really made it as a rock star until you've been spoofed by Weird Al Yankovic. James Blunt just joined the club, as the rock parodist remade his "You're Beautiful" into "You're Pitiful," but Al obviously overlooked the comedy goldmine here—a guy named Blunt singing a song called "High." Look for Blunt next month as he kicks off another U.S. tour.



20

OUTKAST

"MIGHTY O"

IDLEWILD

Two years, one name change and approximately 643 delays after they started filming, Outkast are finally ready for their close-up. The rap duo's new Prohibition-era movie—featuring this Cab Calloway-ish soundtrack jam—is finally opening this month. Catch them jitterbugging like a Polaroid picture at theaters nationwide.

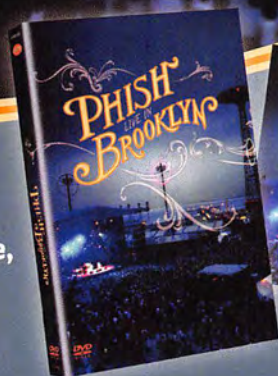
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Thousands of Possibilities

GET YOURS

Depeche Mode, new wave hair models (left to right): Martin Gore, Andrew Fletcher, Dave Gahan and Alan Wilder.



LOSING THEIR RELIGION

MOODY SYNTH-ROCK GODS INVENT A STADIUM-FILLING CREED

DEPECHE MODE

SPEAK & SPELL ★★

MUSIC FOR THE MASSES ★★★

VIOLATOR ★★★★★

RHINO

GIVEN THEIR ENSHRINED status as high priests of moping electropop, it's easy to forget that Depeche Mode weren't born gloomy. In 1980 they were four fresh-faced lads from a London suburb, armed with synths, asymmetric hair and a wussy name lifted from a French fashion magazine.

Their debut, *Speak & Spell*—one of three DM albums reissued in remastered editions—seemed like a dinky footnote compared with the work of more ambitious peers like the Human League and OMD. But a quarter-century later its primitive bleeps and plinks, suggestive of a kindergarten Kraftwerk, sound charmingly naive. The mood is cheery and carefree, and frontman Dave Gahan preens in his role of pretty-boy narcissist (their first single was aptly titled “Dreaming of Me”).

One personnel change nudged DM to the dark side. Vince Clarke, their primary songwriter, packed it in after the perky horndog mantra “Just Can’t Get Enough” (he went on to mastermind the upbeat

pop duos Yazoo and Erasure). Classically trained keyboardist Alan Wilder stepped in, songwriting fell to the occasionally cross-dressing Martin Gore and DM settled into a sulk, a shift that won them a rabid, frequently cross-dressing cult.

This batch of reissues—each padded with bonus B-sides and a brief making-of documentary—travels from gauche origins to world domination. Between 1981 and 1987, when they released their sixth album, *Music for the Masses*, Depeche Mode reached a big audience of angsty teens by using the language, imagery and drama of religion.

It was essentially an agnostic version of U2’s pop spirituality. Depeche dressed up rock clichés in theological garb, connecting love, sex and drugs to sin and the promise of salvation. They were hardly devout, having dissed God’s “sick sense of humor” on 1984’s “Blasphemous Rumors,” and to their fans, the irreverence made them feel more messianic. Here was a band who said organized religion was a sham and dared to imply they could fill the void.

Music for the Masses isn’t just huge but unrelenting, muscled up with industrial guitar, Goth grit and arena ambition. The clanking surge of “Never Let Me Down Again” and trancey gearshifts of “Behind the Wheel” proceed with a stark, mechani-

cal logic. The effect is hypnotic: On the DVD, Wilder cites minimalist composers Philip Glass and Michael Nyman as influences on the arrangements. (His 1995 exit is a chief reason DM turned so anemic.)

By the release of *Violator* in 1990, they were mass enough to incite a mini-riot at a West Hollywood record-signing. Justifiably their biggest critical and commercial success, it includes their greatest moment, “Enjoy the Silence,” a stroke of genius from Wilder and producer Flood, who added a nervous pulse and haunting guitar line to a Gore ballad, creating a melancholy dance-floor epic.

The obligatory anti-God singalong “Personal Jesus” is an irresistible electro-blues strut, but the rest unfolds at a mesmerizing crawl, showcasing the fastidious production. The twinkling flotation-tank lullaby “Waiting for the Night” and the anguished rehab hymn “Clean” are marvels of spotlight detail and layered atmospherics. DM never came close to matching this sumptuous career peak. Later albums tested the faith of their kinky cult, but in *Violator* they can claim a sacred text for the ages.

DENNIS LIM

DOWNLOAD: “New Life,” “Enjoy the Silence,” “Never Let Me Down Again”

POOF-POP CLASSICS

Jerry Lee, briefly
distracted by a
comely sixth-grader.



DEVIL INSIDE

THE KILLER'S SATANIC ROCK & ROLL MOMENT AND LONG COUNTRY DECLINE

JERRY LEE LEWIS

A HALF CENTURY OF HITS ★★½

TIME LIFE

JERRY LEE IS big—it's the records that got small. The Killer may be the only rock star who's made a second career out of admitting he's long past his prime. His peak was 1957-'58, when he roared his bristling hits "Whole Lot of Shakin' Going On," "Breathless" and "Great Balls of Fire," hammered at his piano like a mortal enemy and genuinely feared he was going to Hell—the first of these three discs ends with Lewis spitting out tortured Pentecostal rhetoric and declaring that the devil is in him. (He married his 13-year-old second cousin, shot his own bass player and showed up with a gun at Elvis Presley's house, so he wasn't bluffing.) Since then he's coasted on his legend, with diminishing returns. A *Quarter-Century of Hits* would be a more accurate title—only four songs here postdate 1981, and he hasn't released a new album in ten years.

Lewis did have hits through the early '80s; it's just that all of them were on the country charts. His persona was that of an aging roué, nostalgic for his priapic youth and constantly dropping his own name. When he wasn't crooning material like "I Wish I Was Eighteen Again" and "Middle Age Crazy" and "Thirty-Nine and Holding," he cut waterlogged reworkings of the Johnny Cash and Big Bopper and Stick McGhee tunes he'd heard on the radio in younger days. Preaching and declaiming as much as his disintegrating voice would allow, he never stopped looking back at his moment of glory, no matter how much his producers' modish Nashville clichés dragged him down. Still, two and a half haphazardly sequenced discs of his later years (with two nondescript 1952 amateur acetates as bait for completists) grievously outlast the poignancy of his Viagra routine. For the hellfire that made his reputation, go for one of the many collections of his Sun years; for a career survey worth listening to all the way through, try the one-disc *Definitive Collection*. It's all Killer, no filler.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD: "Great Balls of Fire," "Whole Lot of Shakin' Going On," "Real Wild Child (Wild One)"

Reissues The Guide



The Bangles: In the '80s, humidity was a menace to hairdos.

THE SCORE

★★★★★	CLASSIC
★★★★	GREAT
★★★	GOOD
★★	MEDIOCRE
★	FOUL

THE BANGLES

WE ARE THE '80S ★★★★★

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

All-girl L.A. lookers, mixing Chrisie Hynde and bubblegum, make perfect 10-hit wonders

One suspects the suits at Legacy of quick-buck irony in this new line of *We Are the '80s* nostalgia comps: Bow Wow Wow and Rick Springfield don't exactly indicate a singular aesthetic vision. But if 14 tracks is 13 too many for Scandal, it suits the Bangles perfectly. With hardly a trace of B-side bullshit or "Supersonic Bangs" prehistory, the ladies who crunch fill a disc the way a dentist fills a scrip: swiftly and sweetly. The greatest cover ever ("Hazy Shade of Winter," originally by Simon & Garfunkel) mingles with Prince-penned hustle ("Manic Monday") and "Eternal Flame" (later known as Shakira's "Underneath Your Clothes"). Still, the band's heart remains the über-harmonized Anglophilia of "Hero Takes a Fall," while "Going Down to Liverpool" perfected passionate janglepop that defies even the suits' most cynical schemes.

JANE DARR

DOWNLOAD: "Hero Takes a Fall," "Walk Like an Egyptian," "In Your Room"

DJ JAZZY JEFF & THE FRESH PRINCE

THE VERY BEST OF ★★½

JIVE/LEGACY

Will Smith's rap career launched his acting career, and hip-hop was better for it

Top-billed in the duo, DJ Jazzy Jeff had a pioneering touch reflected in his name but still ended up the answer to a trivia question. His partner, teen rapper Will Smith, went on to kill aliens and robots, box Sonny Liston, bed Eva Mendes and become a more popular actor than Denzel Washington. But as the Fresh Prince, he was a vanilla LL Cool J, biting the man-boy's roar for boy-man songs like "Parents Just Don't Understand," his 1988 pop smash. Most rappers grew up too fast. Smith rapped like a Cosby kid who never wanted to grow up at all. His tall tales ("Girls Ain't Nothing but Trouble") were likable, not memorable, and the poetry ("Summertime") was pedestrian but not offensive. For all of the screaming, "A Nightmare on My Street" was bloodless, strictly PG. Looking back, parents probably would understand.

JEFF CHANG

DOWNLOAD: "Brand New Funk"

BRUCE HORNSBY

INTERSECTIONS 1985-2005 ★★

RCA/LEGACY

Four CDs + a DVD = an MOR overkill that outsmugs even Sting

To jazz renegade Ornette Coleman and classic-rock cynic Roger Waters, Bruce Hornsby is the go-to guy for pop songwriting smarts and top-drawer piano playing of impeccable elegance. For most of us he's the "The Way It Is" guy, thanks to his 1986 hit's chiming piano riff and three-million-selling parent album. *Intersections* is the earnest Virginian's bid for serious consideration,



Gram Parsons:
"Would you like
some churros
with your
chimichanga?"



A clip from
Wilson Pickett's
little-regarded
exercise video.

a splurge of esoterica focusing on recent, radical reworkings of fan favorites ("The Way It Is" done in the manner of Glenn Gould). However, only on "The Valley Road"—a 1990 live Grateful Dead track, of all things—does Hornsby shake off the faux jazz and ersatz bluegrass "studies" and play with something approaching the joy and freedom of his jazz and Cajun heroes.

TONY POWER

DOWNLOAD: "The Way It Is"

DANIEL JOHNSTON

WELCOME TO MY WORLD

★★★★

ETERNAL YIP EYE/HIGH WIRE

Disturbed underground icon who was portrayed in *The Devil and Daniel Johnston* documentary. Rockers and bluesmen talk a lot about Satan. But trembly voiced Daniel Johnston actually confronts the Devil, in the form of friends and family he imagines to be "possessed." The 45-year-old's bipolar disorder—scrutinized in last year's disturbing documentary and long ago inflamed by a really bad acid trip—helps explain the harrowing and hallucinatory little tunes he has recorded largely himself since 1980. But this well-selected overview of his jumpy, spare, guitar-and-chord-organ releases—up to 1992, short of the revelatory major-label debut *Fun*—affirms Johnston's deliberate, sometimes brilliant songcraft. "Man Obsessed" is a sunny but chilling Squeeze-style ode to his life's love. Heartbreaking and hilarious, the old-timey piano track "Never Relaxed" tells of an unlucky boy destined for hell. Usually agitated, often inspired, Johnston never departed from the crossroads.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD: "Walking the Cow," "Man Obsessed," "The Sun Shines Down on Me"

LUNA

BEST OF LUNA ★★★★★

RHINO

Dreamy indie-rock band who murmured about romantic distress

The great NYC guitar band of the '90s refined the big-city blare of the Velvet Underground into languorous rock noir. Harvard grad Dean Wareham got his start playing yawning dream-jams in Galaxie 500, but in Luna he strummed more resolutely and pronounced his consonants, becoming an articulate chronicler of doomed love among the Lower East Side's shy and overeducated. Seven of the 17 songs on this best-of come from the band's 1995 high point, *Penthouse*, in which they set a template they'd barely tweak for a decade: languid, watery riffs, purring evocations of woozy romantic comedown, distracted beat, lush solo and a sheepish kiss goodnight. These are the songs that sent the pretty rich kids to sleep.

JON DOLAN

DOWNLOAD: "Moon Palace," "Chinatown"

GRAM PARSONS

THE COMPLETE REPRISE SESSIONS ★★★★★

RHINO

The George Washington of country rock, recapped over three CDs

The Gram Parsons legend—country-rock pinup at 22, charred, drug-filled corpse at 26—has filled books and films but few CDs: There's little more to his 18-month solo career than can be found on his two sublime studio albums, *GP* and *Grievous Angel*. Recently unearthed masters provide this collection's hook: alternate versions that neither tarnish nor burnish the legend. Parsons's voice, always pitched somewhere between wounded and out of tune, flounders on "Kiss the Children" (*GP*'s sappiest number) but winds exquisitely around Emmylou Harris's deflowered nun on a "new" version of "Love Hurts." There's a subtler "Brass Buttons" that perhaps edges the original, perfunctory snatches of radio interview material and a big old booklet, but no revela-

tions. For completists and packaging fetishists only.

TONY POWER

DOWNLOAD: "Love Hurts," "Brass Buttons," "Hickory Wind"

WILSON PICKETT

THE DEFINITIVE WILSON PICKETT

★★★★★

ATLANTIC/RHINO

Southern soul's midnight mover

For once, the 30 songs on these two CDs actually are definitive. True, they cover only the Wicked Pickett's early years, '62 to '72. But his late peaks aren't as consistently intense, powerful, assured, macho or, truth to tell, tender—once taken for a shameless novelty, his "Hey Jude" now stands high among inspired Beatles covers. And though the 14 extras on 1992's *A Man and a Half* are almost as terrific, stylistically they can be distracting. Possessor of one of history's great shouting baritones, which he regularly revved to a scream when he found his sound, Pickett was also the master of Southern soul's rolling funk, most of which he recorded in Muscle Shoals, like the Alabaman he was, not the sentimentally canonized Memphis. Slick, sharp and felt, he defined the genre as well as this compilation defines him.

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD: "In the Midnight Hour," "Land of 1000 Dances"

THIRD EYE BLIND

THIRD EYE BLIND: A COLLECTION

★★★

RHINO

Doot doot doot! Doot doot doot doot! Plus 18 other songs

Edgier than Matchbox Twenty but skinnier than Smash Mouth, Third Eye Blind were the late-'90s couple-of-hits wonder it was OK to like, kinda. Frontman Stephan Jenkins was unafraid to swing for the cheap seats with Top-40-friendly choruses, expertly combining vaguely hippiesh doggerel ("You touch the tattoo of the sun on a warm belly that once carried a baby for a while") with a bracing slap of rock-star vanity (a trait that continues, judging by the excessive 19 tracks included here). The best of *A Collection*—in fact the comp's sole raison d'être—comes first: "Semi-Charmed Life," easily the finest (and in fact only) summertime singalong radio smash about crank-fueled sex. Like the band's career, it's downhill from there: Only the hopped-up "Sweet Jane" rip "Never Let You Go" and the shoulda-been-big "Blinded" connect. The rest is semi-memorable.

ANDY GREENWALD

DOWNLOAD: "Semi-Charmed Life"

BLENDER APPROVED

THE BEST NEW RELEASES FROM THE PAST MONTHS



THE REPLACEMENTS

DON'T YOU KNOW WHO I THINK I WAS?

RHINO

A one-disc best-of—juvenile, amateur and boozily brilliant—from the fuckup geniuses of '80s indie rock.



WIRE

PINK FLAG

PINK FLAG

On their 1977 debut, the English art-schoolers strip punk down to its taut core. The best of three new reissues.

NEIL YOUNG

THE 1960s AND '70s

DEATH, DRUGS, EVEN CSNY: YOUNG TURNED CHAOS INTO STORMY GREATNESS BY JAMES SLAUGHTER

EVERY
ORIGINAL
CD
REVIEWED

FRIENDS CALL HIM Shakey, with good reason: No major rock star is as unpredictable as Neil Young. The son of a prominent Canadian sportswriter, Young made his name in L.A. as a member of Buffalo Springfield, whose 1966 debut created a buckskin template for

country-rock. He left and rejoined that band and his next, the supergroup Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, as the mood struck him, but has regularly returned to his favorite backing band, Crazy Horse—a trio who, after five decades, still have only rudimentary skills. (David Crosby once sniffed that Crazy Horse “should’ve never been allowed to be musicians at all.”) During Young’s imperial phase, 1969 to 1979, he made remarkable albums in startling profusion, taking in acoustic balladry as well as stoned experiments in proto-grunge. He drew much of his best music from dark experiences: After Crazy Horse guitarist Danny Whitten used his severance pay from Young to finance a final, fatal drug binge in 1972, Young made *Tonight’s the Night* as a requiem. As a result, he not only survived punk rock’s assassination of older rockers but even found himself lauded by Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols, a long-term Young fan.



NEIL YOUNG ENJOYS A LAUGH WITH BANDMATE DAVID CROSBY.

ESSENTIAL

EVERYBODY KNOWS THIS IS NOWHERE

REPRISE, 1969

★★★★★



Young met Crazy Horse when he stole bassist Billy Talbot’s old lady, singer Robin Lane. Infidelities forgotten, they

honed a fabulous sound—hulking riffs, noisy solos, wobbly harmonies—starting here. And they still make the same racket today, four decades after this album, along with the Velvet Underground’s debut, invented alt-rock. “All the songs sound the same,” a fan once shouted at Young. “It’s all the same song,” he replied.

Download: “Cinnamon Girl,” “Down by the River,” “Cowgirl in the Sand”

TONIGHT’S THE NIGHT

REPRISE, 1975

★★★★★



With Crazy Horse guitarist Danny Whitten and roadie Bruce Berry dead from ODs, an anguished Young

and band drank and smoked themselves stupid. “We were so screwed up that we could easily just fall on our faces,” said Young, but instead they made one of rock’s rawest albums: Bum notes and slurred vocals abound, but so do honest, gripping, desperately moving songs.

Download: “Albuquerque,” “Mellow My Mind,” “Roll Another Number (For the Road)”

RUST NEVER SLEEPS

REPRISE, 1979

★★★★★



“I like punk rock because the people making it are alive and don’t give a shit,” explained Young. *Rust* was

his thrilling response and perhaps his strongest set of songs: powerful ballads on one side, Crazy Horse kicking noisy ass on the other. Opener “My My, Hey Hey” lauded Johnny Rotten and provided Kurt Cobain with his suicide-note epitaph, “It’s better to burn out than to fade away.”

Download: “My My, Hey Hey (Out of the Blue),” “Powderfinger”

GREAT

AFTER THE GOLDRUSH

REPRISE, 1970

★★★★★



When a second Crazy Horse LP was derailed by Whitten’s heroin addiction, Young literally retreated to his cellar to

record. Largely acoustic, with some of his best-loved songs, its hushed melancholy chimed with the come-down mood of the post-’60s, providing his breakthrough.

Download: “Don’t Let It Bring You Down,” “After the Goldrush”

ON THE BEACH

REPRISE, 1974

★★★★★



Now on a diet of “honey slides,” a lethal dish of fried marijuana and honey, his songs turned bleak and muzzy.

But they’re also incisive, attacking hippie idealism on “Ambulance Blues” and invoking ex-acquaintance Charles Manson on the snarling, funky “Revolution Blues.”

Download: “Revolution Blues,” “Ambulance Blues”

ZUMA

REPRISE, 1975

★★★★★



Three years after Whitten died, Young re-formed Crazy Horse with replacement guitarist Frank “Poncho”

Sampedro. What did Poncho offer Young? “An ounce of really good grass and some toot.” *Zuma*’s a blast, from the swaggering “Barstool Blues” to the majestic “Cortez the Killer.”

Download: “Barstool Blues,” “Cortez the Killer”

DECADE

REPRISE, 1977

★★★★★



Almost 30 years old and still his finest compilation. It ranges from Buffalo Springfield’s tough ’60s pop to CSNY’s furious, Nixon-baiting “Ohio” alongside the cream of his early-’70s solo work and a handful of otherwise unavailable tracks.

Download: “Ohio,” “Winterlong”

CHECK IT OUT

HARVEST REPRISE, 1972 ★★★



Young has often dismissed his biggest-selling album: "Heart of Gold," his lone No. 1 single, "put me in the middle

of the road," he wrote. "Traveling there soon became a bore." A slipped disc had left him unable to hold an electric guitar, which helped lead to a rustic country vibe, heightened by his glossiest production. Meanwhile, Jack Nitzsche's deranged orchestration turns "A Man Needs a Maid" from sexist garbage into poignant sexist garbage. The title track and "Old Man," however, remain delights.

Download: "Harvest," "Heart of Gold"

COMES A TIME REPRISE, 1978 ★★★



Recorded partly in Florida and Nashville, this was the most satisfying of his periodic ventures into

easygoing, country-ish folk, and his best-selling album since *Harvest*. Crazy Horse make characteristically chaotic appearances on "Lotta Love" and "Look Out for My Love," and "Motorcycle Mama" is a caterwauling mess, but elsewhere Young is at his most charming, crooning sweet songs to son Zeke and duets with then-girlfriend Nicolette Larson. He even smiles on the cover!

Download: "Comes a Time," "Look Out for My Love"

LIVE RUST REPRISE, 1979 ★★★



The triumphant *Rust Never Sleeps* concerts were a great visual spectacle, with Young and Crazy Horse

dwarfed by mammoth amplifiers and roadies dressed in *Star Wars*-inspired costumes. Sadly, visual spectacles don't really transfer to the album format, but this live set allows listeners to both hear Young and Crazy Horse at what may be their peak and ponder the wisdom of Young's decision to sing part of "Cortez the Killer" in a dreadful faux-Jamaican accent.

Download: "Cinnamon Girl"

BE CAREFUL

NEIL YOUNG REPRISE, 1968 ★★★



Young's solo debut is caught between the orchestrated West Coast pop of Buffalo Springfield and

the future, dabbling in soul and folk in an attempt to find his own voice. It's polished (Ry Cooder is among the crack musicians featured) and weighed down with arrangements (he later dismissed this record as "overdub city"), but the best tracks still find their way into his live sets.

Download: "The Loner," "The Old Laughing Lady"

CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG DÉJÀ VU ATLANTIC, 1970 ★★★



On release, the first CSNY album sold 2 million copies, but it has aged badly. Young provides the sparse, stun-

ning "Helpless" and a quirky suite called "County Girl" and collaborates with Stills on cute closer "Everybody I Love You." The rest is long on self-important hippie bluster like "Woodstock," about the festival Young later compared to "people standing around a pile of shit, looking at it."

Download: "Helpless," "Country Girl"

TIME FADES AWAY REPRISE, 1973 ★★★



His 1973 tour was a disaster: Playing in hockey arenas didn't suit his music and, angry over band demands

for more money, he hit the bottle. Throughout, he greeted audiences expecting mellow folk with noisy new songs, including his defiant manifesto "Don't Be Denied." Critically savaged in its day, *Time Fades Away* starkly documented the chaos: "It's the worst record I ever made," claimed Young, "but as a documentary of what was happening to me, it was a great record." Discordant, powerful and currently unavailable.

Download: "Journey Through the Past," "Don't Be Denied"

FOR FANS ONLY

JOURNEY THROUGH THE PAST REPRISE, 1972 ★



No one could accuse Young of overrating his unwatchable directorial debut: "It's got no plot, no point,

no stars," he explained. "It's hard to say what the movie means." Likewise the soundtrack, featuring lo-fi live recordings—including an interminable version of "Words"—film dialogue and choral singing. His label understandably pulled out of the film's distribution. Less understandably, they promoted this double album as *Harvest*'s follow-up, provoking a critical mauling. Currently unavailable.

Download: "Soldier"

CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG 4 WAY STREET ATLANTIC, 1971 ★★



For evidence of why Young was so uncommitted to CSNY even at the height of their success, consider this

live set, recorded in 1970. There's a spine-tingling solo Young medley and his interesting acoustic take on "Cowgirl in the Sand," but the electric jams are turgid, and the less said about Stills's appalling and pompous "America's Children," the better.

Download: "Cowgirl in the Sand"

AMERICAN STARS 'N BARS REPRISE, 1977 ★★



It was planned as a concept album, part U.S. history, part commentary on bar culture. But Young investigated the latter

too thoroughly. "I couldn't remember the history part," he admitted, "so we left that out." It turned into an uneven mess: sex-obsessed country songs, Crazy Horse rampaging through "Like a Hurricane," the spectacularly weird home recording "Will to Love" and "Homegrown," a cheerfully dumb pothead anthem.

Download: "Like a Hurricane," "Will to Love"

FURTHER LISTENING

CRAZY HORSE CRAZY HORSE REPRISE 1970 ★★★★★

"When we weren't playing with Neil, we were dogshit," said bassist Billy Talbot of the Horse's Young-less albums. Their debut is the exception. Young contributes the quirky hoedown "Dance Dance Dance," but the star is Danny Whitten, whose heartbreaking "I Don't Want to Talk About It"—allegedly about a relationship with a 16-year-old girl—became a much-covered standard.

Download: "I Don't Want to Talk About It"

BUFFALO SPRINGFIELD RETROSPECTIVE ATCO, 1969 ★★★★★

Talk of this band's greatness—much of it from Young himself—can seem overblown when you hear their three uneven albums. But this compilation cuts the chaff, leaving startling early Young tracks including the hard-riffing "Mr. Soul" and the folksy "I Am a Child," which point in the twin directions his solo career later took.

Download: "Mr. Soul"

FURTHER VIEWING

RUST NEVER SLEEPS: THE CONCERT FILM VAPOR ★★★★★

Young and Crazy Horse's October 1978 show at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, filmed simply. You can't capture the sheer volume at which Crazy Horse played, but with announcements from Woodstock booming over the PA, an outsized stage set and Young doing a spot of frankly terrible "acting," you get some sense of the event.

Apparently, red-and-white plaid pants are hard to find.



A NEW SHADE OF WHITE

INTRODUCING JACK WHITE'S TIGHT, SEMI-DEMOCRATIC NEW POWER-POP BAND

THE RACONTEURS

THE MUSIC BOX AT HENRY FONDA THEATER
LOS ANGELES

JUNE 7, 2006 ★★☆☆

BOOTLEGGERS DON'T USUALLY hawk knockoff T-shirts outside a band's sixth gig. But the Raconteurs are an unusual case: A new group formed by White Stripes mastermind Jack White, pop-rock singer Brendan Benson and the rhythm section from Cincinnati's raucous British Invasion throwbacks the Greenhornes, they had an instant audience even when they were only a blog rumor. They insist they're a real band, not a one-off favor to White's less famous pals; most of their songs are effectively White/Benson duets, and all four of them recently moved to Nashville, where they might even want us to believe they live in the same house, à la the Monkees or *Making the Band*.

Onstage, White and Benson expressly demonstrate that neither one runs the show: They take turns talking between songs, and sometimes even share a microphone to harmonize. Still, there's obviously a star here. Before the sold-out 1,311-capacity theater's curtain rises on the band and its huge, stylized "R" banner, one woman is trying to figure out where White will be standing, so she can get the

best view of her "future ex-husband." And White, who's traded his other band's red-and-white uniform for a black T-shirt and grotesque plaid pants, gets wild cheers for a long, tweedly guitar solo on the show's second song, "Level."

White's an unabashed rock & roll traditionalist who usually leads a very unconventional band, and soloing in front of a full rhythm section isn't something he's gotten to do much. In fact, he's described the Raconteurs as "the complete opposite of the White Stripes," which is partly true; an all-male guitar/bass/drums beat combo adhering to pop formulas that have been

in place since the Beatles, they couldn't be much more conventional. (Patrick Keeler flaunts his showy high-speed drum rolls, as if to emphasize that he's definitely *not* Meg White.) But as a traditionalist, Jack likes to explore those conventions and show that they're still viable, and the band play with the authority and grand flourishes of classic-rock leviathans. Augmented by extra keyboardist/guitarist Dean Fertita, the Raconteurs are the tight, deft wall-of-sound group that the White Stripes couldn't and shouldn't be, and what they lose from the Stripes' fang-and-claw chaos they mostly regain in juicy power-pop arrangements.

As the band stretch their 34-minute album to an hour-plus show with jams and covers (plus one speedy new song, "5 on the 5"), White clearly relishes being a sideman, especially when he gets to play Mick Ronson to Benson's David Bowie on the Ziggy Stardust lighter-waver "It Ain't Easy." But he can't exactly blend in, no matter how hard he tries. In this band of equals, White's style, charisma, talent and fame make him more equal than the others. By the first encore, a cover of the frantic electric blues "Headin' for the Texas Border" by '70s California cult band the Flamin' Groovies, his voice is shredded from all the whooping high notes he's been nailing. If he weren't this new band's selling point, he'd be its secret weapon.

DOUGLAS WOLK

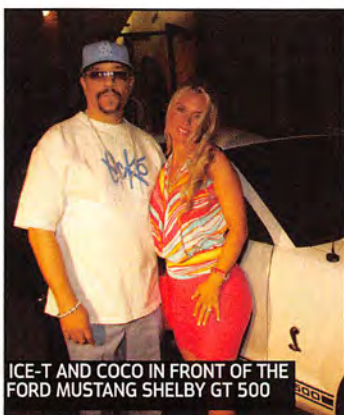
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7/20-21	LOS ANGELES
7/22-23	SAN FRANCISCO
7/25	PORTLAND, OR
7/26	VANCOUVER, BC
7/27	SEATTLE
8/3	MINNEAPOLIS
8/4	CHICAGO *
8/5	ANN ARBOR, MI
8/6	CLEVELAND

*The Raconteurs are playing on Friday, the first of Lollapalooza's three days at Grant Park in Chicago. Expect temperatures in excess of 90 degrees, water balloons from the Flaming Lips and near-nudity from Red Hot Chili Peppers.



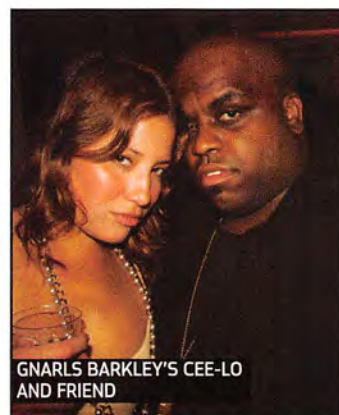
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ICE-T AND COCO IN FRONT OF THE FORD MUSTANG SHELBY GT 500

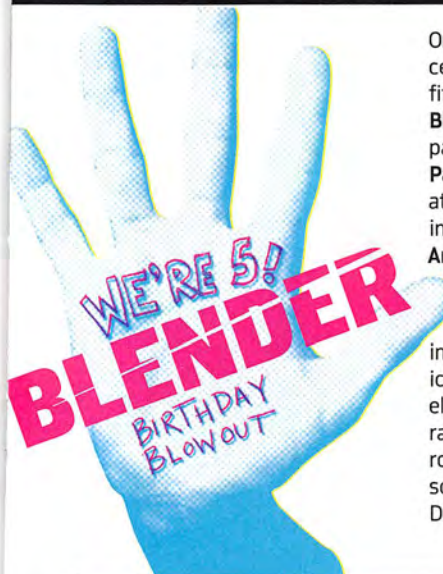


SETH MEYERS



GNARLS BARKLEY'S CEE-LO AND FRIEND

GUEST LIST



On May 23, **Blender** and **DKNY Jeans** celebrated the magazine's milestone fifth anniversary issue with a "**Birthday Blowout**" at Studio 450 in Manhattan. The party, also sponsored by **Ford Mustang**, **Patrón Tequila** and **Virgin Mobile**, was attended by 600+ celebrities and music industry VIPs, including **Russell Simmons**, **Amerie**, **Vanessa Carlton**, **Gnarls Barkley** (Cee-Lo and Danger Mouse) and **Ice T**.

Guests lounged in rooftop cabanas, indulged in birthday party staples (cake, ice cream, party favors!) and rocked out to electrifying performances from legendary rapper **Ghostface Killah**, London's indie-rock sensation **Art Brut** and an awesome soundtrack provided by New York's hipster DJs **The MisShapes**.



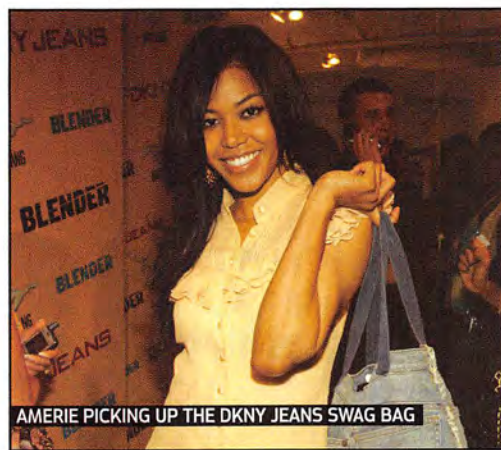
BLENDER'S BIRTHDAY BLOWOUT ICE SCULPTURE CAKE BY PATRÓN



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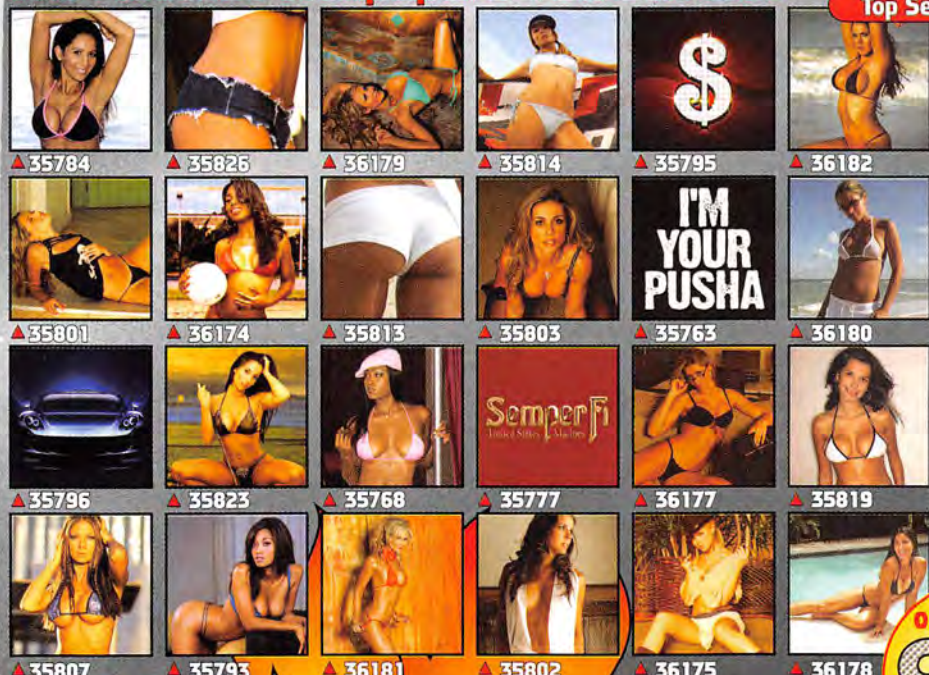
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- 35759 Jay-Z - 99 Problems
- 35762 JoJo - Leave (Get Out)
- 35783 Keane - Somewhere Only We Know
- 35788 Ludacris - Get Back
- 35761 Marvin Gaye - Sexual Healing
- 35775 My Chemical Romance - Helena
- 35760 Outkast - The Way You Move
- 35794 Public Enemy - Bring That Beat Back (v.3)
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AMERICAN IDLE

THE LONG-DELAYED OUTKAST MUSICAL EXTRAVAGANZA FINALLY SEES THE LIGHT OF DAY AND MAY BE THE SUMMER'S MOST UNLIKELY BLOCKBUSTER **BY STEVE KANDELL**

ANY MOVIE WHOSE release has been delayed for nearly a year usually arrives bearing at least a whiff of failure. And when the delayed movie happens to be a big-budget period-piece musical overseen by a first-time director and starring two rappers with limited acting experience, the smell becomes overwhelming.

Fortunately for all involved, Outkast's ambitious, eye-popping gangster (as opposed to *gangsta*) epic **IDLEWILD** doesn't reek, although its reach may exceed its grasp. Written and directed by longtime video director Bryan Barber, this long-gestating project finds Andre "Andre 3000" Benjamin and Antwan "Big Boi" Patton playing Prohibition-era caricatures of their Outkast personas. "The characters were drawn from my and Dre's personalities," Big Boi tells *Blender*. "Our own life experiences are thrown in here and there." And just as the breakout *Speakerboxxx/The Love Below* was basically two solo albums grafted together, this at times feels like two separate movies.

In one storyline, Andre's Percival is a painfully shy mortician/musician who becomes romantically involved with a mysterious torch singer (comely newcomer Paula Patton, no relation to Big Boi). In the other, Big Boi's Rooster is a philandering nightclub manager caught up in a bloody turf war with a scheming thug named Trumpy (the omnipresent

Terrence Howard). Though Percival and Rooster are childhood pals and most of the movie's action takes place in Rooster's rural Georgia club, The Church, there isn't much connection between the two threads beyond a series of visually lush choreographed set pieces that blend contemporary hip-hop with big-band jazz, often with stultifying results. But Big Boi resists classifying this as a musical, stressing that

80% of the music on *Idlewild*'s soundtrack was written and recorded *after* the film finished production.

"It's not *The Wizard of Oz*, like I'm talking to you and just break into song," he contends. "It's a real movie that happens to have a musical component."

One such component features Andre 3000 serenading a recently deceased loved one on an autopsy table to the less-than-sentimental strains of "She Lives in My Lap." It's a jarring sequence, evoking chuckles instead of pathos and likely to confuse as many people as it entertains. But it's anomalous juxtapositions like this, both musically and otherwise, that have moved 20 million Outkast albums, so Barber just might be on to something, and even if *Idlewild* occasionally bewilders, it rarely bores. *The Love Below* garnered its fair share of Prince comparisons, and this project could as well: *Purple Rain* it's not, but thankfully, neither is it *Under the Cherry Moon*.

Musical oddities of a different sort abound in Alexandra Lipsitz's documentary **AIR GUITAR NATION**, which is smarter than any movie about drunken idiots miming Randy Rhoads solos in front of other drunken idiots needs to be.

"That's just about the dumbest thing I've ever heard of," grumbles CNN's Jack Cafferty on-air after a segment about costumed mock-stars duking it out in New York for a trip to the Air Guitar

THE EXCITED-O-METER

WE HAVEN'T SEEN 'EM YET ... AND WE'RE NOT EVEN SURE WE WANT TO



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C-Diddy rocks invisible guitar, invisible shirt.

BLENDER APPROVED

The best movies and DVDs of the past months



BROTHERS OF THE HEAD

Siamese-twins-turned-rockers.



THE COMPLETE MR. ARKADIN

Orson Welles' thriller reborn as a blingy box set.

MUSIC DVDS

Ad-Rock fights for his right to get better seats.



GARDEN PARTY

HIP-HOP INNOVATORS REINVENT THE CONCERT FLICK, WITH DIZZYING RESULTS **BY STEVE KANDELL**

BEASTIE BOYS AWESOME; I FUCKIN' SHOT THAT!

THINKFILM

★★★★½

RATHER THAN COZY up to the new Beasties live DVD with a bowl of Jiffy Pop, consider Dramamine instead. The film's concept is certainly novel—producers handed 50 fans video cameras to shoot the Beasties' October 2004 homecoming show at Madison Square Garden—but the frenetic mess that this footage has been edited into is not for the weak of stomach. However, once you get past the zillion-cuts-per-minute pace and the shaky handcam imagery,

the performance itself finds Messrs. Horovitz, Diamond and Yauch in peak form, even if the album they were touring behind was something of a turkey.

Twenty years' worth of musical shapeshifting are represented here, including a set of *Check Your Head/III Communication*-era instrumentals performed wedding band-style in ruffled tuxes, while newer, lesser songs like "Triple Trouble" hold their own next to crowd-pleasers like "Paul Revere" and "Sabotage." And the

film's central gimmick, while visually frustrating at times, offers vantage points conventional concert movies wouldn't bother with, such as the men's room and the seat next to Ben Stiller.

GRAND MAL SEIZURE ALERT!

THE BEST OF THE REST

CHRIS BROWN CHRIS BROWN'S JOURNEY

(LIVE)

★★

What happens when a hyperactive 16-year-old gets a video camera and too much attention? Chris Brown travels the globe, picking up sneakers in Japan, hype in England and girls all over. Extras include bloopers that differ only slightly from actual takes.

RICHARD THOMPSON 1,000 YEARS OF POPULAR MUSIC

(COOKING VINYL USA)

★★★★

Fairport Convention founding member and folk-rock godfather Richard Thompson condenses the past 1,000 years of music into a near-academic survey, comprising 22 songs ranging from the oldest known English-language song to "Oops! ... I Did It Again."

JOE STRUMMER LET'S ROCK AGAIN!

(IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT)

★★★★

Tough to say what's sadder: that Joe Strummer died shortly after the making of this doc, or seeing the once mighty Clash leader try and corral Atlantic City tourists to his show. The melancholy is offset by Strummer's spirited live performances and endearing interview footage. **LAUREN HARRIS**



LAST GOOD MOVIE YOU SAW?

CYNDI LAUPER MUSICIAN

"Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire. The movies get better every time—more about the characters than the magic. Brilliant."

World Championships in Oulu, Finland, and it's hard to argue with him. But what saves the film from being an excruciating exercise in hipster irony run amok is the fact that its central character, kimono-clad U.S. champ C-Diddy, né soft-spoken aspiring actor David Jung, seems just as befuddled by the appeal of grown men publicly shredding on an invisible axe as grumpy old Jack. C-Diddy's foil, perennial also-ran Bjorn Turoque (say it out loud) doesn't share this detachment, and his obsession with funding his own trips to L.A. and Finland in an ill-fated attempt to dethrone the king makes for the film's more uncomfortable moments.

Turoque also has a book about his escapades due this month, so this pop culture moment may have already reached its tipping point. But if the enthusiasm of the onscreen competitors, organizers, audience members and, truth be told, the screening attendees is any indication, "aireoke" has a fighting chance of knocking karaoke off its perch as the entertainment of choice for booze-drenched social gatherings everywhere. Simon Cowell disparaging fretwork and leg-kicks from the judge's panel may not be far behind.

Finally, the idea of Jeff Bridges playing a small-town sad sack who heads up the novice crew of a porn flick might sound like a potential return to his *Big Lebowski* glory days. Unfortunately, though, **THE AMATEURS** never lives up to its premise, despite backup from the reliably awesome Tim Blake Nelson and Joey Pants.

GUEST LIST

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Yeah, boyeee! Flavor Flav is back and ready to give romance a second chance. Will Flav find true love? Only his clock will tell. Premieres Sunday, August 6 at 10/9c.



FINAL DESTINATION 3 DVD

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NINETY-NINE NIGHTS

MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS, XBOX 360

★★★

IT'LL TAKE WAY more than 99 nights to slash through waves of feudal warriors in this epic battle that rivals any combat scene found in a big-budget Hollywood saga. Relying on sheer bloodlust, the game hands over control of seven superhuman samurai hack-and-slashers embroiled in some lost-in-translation drama about a broken orb and a quest for power—which sounds like pretty much every other Japanese-themed fantasy game ever.

Despite the paint-by-numbers plot, the game's all about zoning out to the Zen of mindless violence, a refreshing change after having to memorize a 30-page playbook just to toss the pigskin in the *Madden* games. The most

**SWORDS!
BLOODSHED!
CLEAVAGE!**

brain-draining part is upgrading the fighters, but such machinations pay off big by unlocking brutal sword-and-melee combos, and even larger piles of enemy corpses will start to collect on the panoramic outdoor battlefields. Thanks to the high-end graphics produced by the pixel-pushing Xbox 360, the environments and characters look so real that even the most bloodthirsty gamers will feel a twinge of remorse for each battered body left in their wake.

Even in fantasyland, good help is hard to find. Legions of allied soldiers have your back, but their dim-witted ways leave players to do the heavy lifting themselves. There's also some creepy mumbo-jumbo going on—kill enemies, then collect their spirits, which will unleash supercharged attacks that keep the bad guys falling like rows of dominoes. Best not to let things like “story” or “thinking” get in the way of good, cathartic bloodshed.

GIZMO OF THE MONTH

LOGITECH DRIVEFX RACING WHEEL

LICENSE REVOKED? PINTO REPO'D? THAT SHOULDN'T STOP YOU FROM GETTING BEHIND THE WHEEL

YOU CAN PIMP the Xbox 360 with solid-gold faceplates or external cooling devices, but until now one thing has been missing—a high-quality racing wheel. It's easy to forget that gas is \$3.50 a gallon when you wrap your meaty paws around the new DriveFX's rubber-coated 10-inch steering wheel (\$100) and stomp on the pedals built into the base. No matter how ridiculous you look sitting on the couch with a fake steering wheel wedged between your thighs, nothing else can give games like *Project Gotham Racing 3* that extra touch of realism. Grid girls and pit crew not included.



Fuzzy dice sold separately.

SIN EPISODES: EMERGENCE



SAINTS ROW



SIN EPISODES: EMERGENCE

RITUAL ENTERTAINMENT, PC

★★★

A forgettable 1998 first-person shooter gets resurrected as a downloadable episodic game, promising six or so hours of fun at 20 bucks a pop. The premiere episode, *Emergence*, is built on the bones of *Half-Life 2*, with less spectacular results—sorta like putting a rocket engine in your Dad's '94 Olds. Despite some gratuitous cheesecake, *Sin's* nothing more than a throwback to last century's shooters. Don't feel compelled to tune in for the next episode.

SAINTS ROW

THQ, XBOX 360

★★★

The next *Grand Theft Auto* won't hit until next year, so wannabe gangsters can bide their time with this lukewarm knock-off, taking the helm of a crew out to prove they're the real top dogs in a brewing gang war. Cruise the streets earning cash and respect, and ultimately take over the entire city. Money-making chores range from the expected—jacking rival gang members, shooting people—to the unexpected, such as the far more subtle insurance fraud. Make yourself an unfortunate accident “victim” and if you survive, the payoff can be big.

PREY

2K GAMES, PC, XBOX 360

★★★

Native American Tommy gets tractor-beamed onto a spaceship and must avoid a lifetime of anal probation by shooting aggressive ETs that crop up at every turn—just as in every other sci-fi shooter. A heavy-handed “embrace your roots” subplot files in later, and the reluctant hero gets



sucked into a spirit world, where his grandpappy teaches him special Indian voodoo to get him off the ship and back to his job as a pit boss at the interplanetary reservation casino.

MADDEN NFL 07

EA, PC, PSP, PS2, XBOX, XBOX 360

☆☆☆

This dorm-room-staple-turned-American-institution has managed to quadruple in complexity over the past 16 years, which may keep some jock wannabes from fulfilling their football fantasies. The 2007 edition does nothing to simplify matters, but there are a handful of notable new features, like the training mini-games, precision blocking and player-specific moves and jukes. But let's be honest: They could put a brick in the box and still sell a million copies.

COMPANY OF HEROES

THQ, PC

☆☆

This World War II real-time strategy joint lets you release any pent-up nerd rage on Nazi we'er-do-wells

using a combo of artillery, infantry and armored vehicles. Cerebral elements take a backseat to the action, but even with the ability to blow up buildings, this game will most likely serve a short tour of duty in the hands of anyone other than the most wedge-worthy gamer.

FINAL FANTASY VII: DIRGE OF CERBERUS

SQUARE ENIX, PS2

☆☆☆

Despite massive changes from the Japanese version to make this game more palatable to Western audiences (read: faster, harder and without an online multiplayer option), most gamers will still have no idea what's going on in this arcade-style spinoff of the deeply convoluted *Final Fantasy* series. Instead of turn-based RPG battle, *Dirge of Cerberus* takes supporting character Vincent Valentine and turns him into a one-man army, meting out justice with an arsenal of creative firearms. Indecipherable to average Joes, but a guaranteed wet dream for *Final Fantasy* fans.



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GEEK FILES

THIS MONTH: 21-YEAR-OLD CANUCK POP-PUNK SONGSTRESS AND ADMITTED GAMING ADDICT **FEFE DOBSON** PROUDLY LETS HER DWEEB FLAG FLY

LAST GOOD GAME PLAYED

I got the *King Kong* game for PSP, but my dog ate it. She just nibbled on it for a while, she didn't, like, swallow it. But it was good until then.

TOUR BUS STAPLES

The band likes car-racing games, but I'm a role-playing kind of girl. Anything where I can save the princess or be the princess. I also like playing movie tie-in games; they just seem to move faster. I guess the band thinks it's a little more dainty for me to play *The Incredibles* or the Harry Potter games.

OLD-SCHOOL FAVORITES

I loved the Power Ranger game for Sega Genesis—I always wanted to be Kimberly, the Pink Ranger. I also remember bugging my mom about the new Hanson game when I was 14. As in Hanson, the band—they had their own videogame. We did a show with them recently, but I didn't tell them about that.

CHARACTER I'D MOST LIKE TO BE

Probably Rogue, from *X-Men*. She's flirty but strong. I like that. And she can fly.

GAMING DRUG OF CHOICE

Watermelon Sour Patch Kids.

MOST CONSECUTIVE HOURS SPENT PLAYING

If I'm doing well, I can probably sit around playing the whole day. I played the first *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* game for about eight hours one day.

POST-SHOW PASTIME: GAMES OR GROUPIES?

Well, I'd probably take the videogames first to entice the groupies.

A FEFE DOBSON GAME WOULD BE LIKE ...

I'd wanna be a sexy superhero, kind of like ... what's her name in *Roger Rabbit*, the redheaded girl? Jessica Rabbit. Someone who's super-duper sexy and kills people by, I don't know, whenever I sing I zap them from my mouth and they die.

GEEKINESS, ON SCALE OF 1 TO 10

Probably around 8.5—I see a game and I'm like, "I want it, I want it!" I'm also a geek because I love playing all of the totally girly ones. I even play all of the Disney games!

GABE SORIA

BLENDER APPROVED

THE BEST GAMES FROM THE PAST MONTHS



HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

EIDOS, PC, PS2, XBOX, XBOX 360

No matter how many people Agent 47 kills, we still wanna rub his bald head.



TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

EIDOS, PC, PSP, PS2, XBOX, XBOX 360

Advanced boob-simulation technology doesn't weigh down a challenging game.

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(LAST PAGE)

WHEN IT COMES TO SEX, HE'S "NOT NORMAL." PLUS, THE MÖTLEY CRÜE DRUMMER, SEEN ON *ROCK STAR*, PISSES VODKA AND LOVES THE U.N. FINALLY, YOU CAN LEARN ...

BY ROB TANNENBAUM
PHOTOGRAPH BY TURE LILLEGRAVEN



WHO DOES TOMMY LEE THINK HE IS?

TOMMY, WHEN WE ASK PEOPLE TO DRAW A SELF-PORTRAIT, THEY AT LEAST SCRAWL A STICK FIGURE. YOU WROTE *SEND HELP*. HOW COME?

You know when you're having a bad day and you're like, "God, somebody just help today, please?" Lots of times there's so much going on in my life that I get overwhelmed. You know, I would love a cocktail right now. Alright, bud, let's have mimosas!

GOOD IDEA! IF YOU WERE A WOMAN, WHO WOULD YOU WANT TO BE?

Hmm. That topless girl right across the pool! No, I wouldn't want to be a woman. The whole female show is just a lot of work.

BUT WOMEN GET TO HAVE MULTIPLE ORGASMS.

You can still have multiple orgasms as a guy. You just gotta have a little reset time.

IF WE DRUG-TESTED YOU RIGHT NOW, WHAT WOULD WE FIND?

A lot of vodka. We ripped it last night. I'd say my urine is 70 percent Grey Goose right now.

WHAT'S THE WORST PLACE YOU'VE EVER VISITED?

A few months ago I did a DJ gig in Croatia with Erick Morillo. We'd spin some records, then I'd jump on the drums, and the promoter wasn't happy—he wanted me to play more drums. These security guys turned on us and were ready to take us down. We were almost being held hostage. For the first time in my life, I was actually scared, dude. Like, "Fuck! We're not gonna get out of here!" It was terrible.

DUDE! HOW DID YOU GET OUT?

We had to call the U.N.! The police escorted our cab, but the promoter was calling the driver, telling him to take us to certain places. Eventually we made it to the airport and jumped on Erick's private jet. It was fucking scary.

YOU FLY ON PRIVATE JETS, BUT CAN YOU TELL US HOW MUCH A QUART OF MILK COSTS?

What is it, like, four bucks? I have no idea. I do my own shopping, but I don't pay very much attention to prices. I'm rich—who gives a shit? [Laughs] I'm fucking with you, dude.

WE USUALLY ASK, "HAVE YOU EVER VIDEOTAPED YOURSELF HAVING SEX?" IN YOUR CASE, WE KNOW THE ANSWER. SO WE'LL ASK, DO YOU STILL VIDEOTAPE YOURSELF HAVING SEX?

Hell no! [Laughs] Hell. No.

LESSON LEARNED. WHAT WOULD AN EX-GIRLFRIEND SAY ABOUT YOU?

"He's fun, he's charming, he's intense, he's hyper, he's passionate, he's retarded."

WHAT DID YOUR SIXTH-GRADE REPORT CARD SAY?

I got A's and B's, but F's in math and history. I figured, Why do I need to know this? History? Who cares? I wasn't there!

WE NEVER THOUGHT OF IT THAT WAY. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR TASTE IN SEX?

Can you say pervert? You know about a hard-on, right? Well, I get plane-ons, cab-ons, limo-ons ... my dick is hard all the time. And I'm like, "Is that OK? Is there something wrong with me?" I don't think that's normal.

MAYBE YOU JUST LIKE RIDING IN CABS AND LIMOS. WHEN WAS YOUR LAST BOOTY CALL?

Hmm. What time is it? [Laughs]

WHAT'S THE ONE QUESTION YOU'RE MOST TIRED OF BEING ASKED?

"Did you make any money off the porno tape?" People come up to me with the videotape box: "Hey, dude, will you sign this?" No! Everybody assumes that it didn't really get stolen, that we put it out and made mil-

lions of dollars, like retarded geniuses. Who would do that? I don't like anything about that videotape.

ARE YOU A GOOD BOY OR A BAD BOY?

I'm right in the middle. I open the door for women, help out little kids and old ladies. I'm a compassionate human being that loves people. And when I want to be bad, I'm a fucking mamacita. [Lifts his mimosa] My philosophy is, "We're not here for a long time, we're here for a good time." [Laughs]



"FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I WAS ACTUALLY SCARED, DUDE."

TANK TOP BY LOADED, HOODED SWEATSHIRT AND VEST BY DIESEL, SUSPENDER PANTS BY FRANKIE MORELLO, WATCH, BELT AND BUCKLE BY RED MONKEY, LEATHER SNEAKERS BY CONVERSE.



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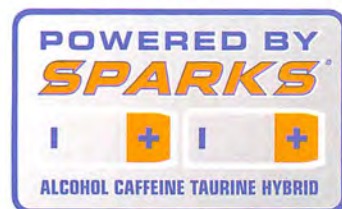
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